

HOW THE PREACHER CAN MORE EFFECTIVELY RELATE THE SERMON TO
WOMEN AS A SEGMENT OF HIS AUDIENCE

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ABSTRACT

This work came out of the conviction of the author that the deep struggles so many Christian women are facing today is due, at least in part, to a failure by male preachers to fully understand the unique needs, characteristics, capacities, behaviors and sorrows of the women in their audience.

The purpose and intent of this thesis is to offer suggestions to male preachers on how they can more effectively relate the sermon to women as a segment of their audiences so that Christ may reign more successfully and intimately in their hearts. For that to occur male preachers must understand something of the physiological, psychological and epistemological differences between men and women, and how an understanding of those general differences impacts the way their female listeners may hear the sermon.

The author endeavored to discover and share more effective methods of exposition and presentation by a two-pronged research program. First, a widely circulated questionnaire which tested various psychological and epistemological theories was compiled and analyzed. Next, focus groups were convened after participants reviewed sermons where women were the main characters in the biblical narrative. The findings from these two sources will hopefully be of benefit to the male preacher in order that women may experience positive change, and better reflect the image of God and his call upon each of their lives.

CHAPTER 1 THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

Introduction

The preaching task is perhaps the most demanding of all the disciplines that a pastor is called on to do. It is a duty whose taxing nature is often overlooked by the young and eager.¹ The difficulty in the preparation and delivery of sermons is rarely realized until one is fully engaged in the process. It involves the week-by-week procedure of consuming reams of information and impressions, wrestling with them (and sometimes with God), and then letting it all spill out in a coherent and helpful form for a congregation to review.

Preaching is still done in most evangelical churches by men. They are men who must preach on those weeks when their marriage is under stress, when they are struggling physically, and when the expectations of a myriad of special interests bay at the office door. He delivers God's truth to an audience that has been conditioned by an entertainment-oriented society to respond to short, bright, funny messages from the sponsor.² He speaks to individuals from diverse backgrounds, cultures and interests who mostly do not care about the tenses of Greek verbs or the finer points of a Nazarite vow.

¹Alice Mathews wrote that how even as a child she found herself “. . . intrigued by the art of preaching.” One would think that a child would have little awareness of such things. But, I was not surprised by her early interest since I too shared a similar experience. Very early on, as a child, I became aware of the power of the pulpit as I watched with rapt attention such great luminaries as Billy Graham, Oral Roberts and Jack Wyrzten preach God's Word over the media airwaves. For several years, I attended family Bible camp where I had the opportunity to hear the best and the brightest communicators the Church in this area had to offer. I had an older cousin who as a young Pentecostal preacher mesmerized, inspired, captivated and moved me. And I watched the reaction that Holy Spirit-inspired preaching had on the hearts of men and women, yet I had no idea of all that went into the preaching task. Alice Mathews, *Preaching That Speaks to Women* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 11.

²Ralph Lewis noted, “The duration of human attention varies from 3 to 24 seconds . . . every sermon must battle for human interest.” Michael Duduit, ed., *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 417.

What they come to hear with varying degrees of eagerness is God's truth and how it can help them live their lives in an authentic manner on any given Monday morning.³

It is a daunting communicative task, one which at times is enough to make a preacher want to hoist the white flag and throw up his hands in hopeless resignation. The fact that people do hear and respond in any measure is a testimony to the fact that God's Spirit still moves to empower the Word in the hearts of men and women. Most ministers would agree that there is nothing that they do that demands more from them than preaching.

In recent years, much help has been offered to overmatched communicators by way of getting to know how best to minister more effectively to an increasingly diverse audience. It is, after all, the first task of an effective communicator. *Amazon.com* can lead one to enough books on ministering to Baby Boomers, Builders, Busters, Generation X and Millennials to easily fill a four-foot shelf in an office bookcase. But, one group that church leadership has taken largely for granted in this effort is that "minority" group that comprises over half their typical Sunday morning audience: *Women*. Often, they are the one group that the books do not talk about.⁴

³Many people can attest to the uneasy feeling of sitting week-after-week listening to sermons that had been given short shrift in favor of other vital components of ministry (and life) such as comforting the sick, counseling the broken, administering programs and staff, as well as caring for a family and maintaining a home. Pastors in most cases are wonderful people who have prepared diligently for years to one day conscientiously and faithfully shepherd a flock of God's choosing. I understand now, having been in ministry for a number of years, the multi-faceted tugs and pulls upon the pastor and preacher which comprise modern, local, church ministry. I love and respect those men I have sat under for their pure dedication, and have learned of God from many of them in spite of some obvious pulpit deficiencies. But, I always thought, in the back of my mind what a tragedy it is to see people come to the table hungry and leave unfed.

⁴Haddon Robinson writing in the foreward of *Preaching That Speaks to Women* by Alice Mathews, 7.

Purpose of the Study

A prominent theme that was continually highlighted by a number of female Christian authors during the course of this study was the fact that women are in pain.⁵ Best selling author Nancy DeMoss, who herself ministers to thousands of women each year, said, “Our culture is experiencing an epidemic of soul-sickness – not just among women ‘out there’ in the world but among those of us in the church.” Words like *exhausted*, *defeated*, *ashamed*, *frazzled*, *discouraged*, *overwhelmed* and even *suicidal* are ones that she says describe a large percentage of Christian women that she has encountered in recent years.⁶ She adds, “. . . Christian women are in trouble – deep trouble – the kind of trouble that requires more than superficial solutions and remedies.”⁷ A small army of female authors and speakers are likewise sounding the alarm.

Women who sit each week in the pews often have gotten there only after rousing the kids (and sometimes husbands) from bed, sewing on last-minute buttons, finding hose without a run and preparing a hasty breakfast. They come to church and strain their ears intently in the hope of hearing that God’s Word has answers for their struggles. They want to know if the sting of past sin will ever go away. They listen to hear if the abortion is forgiven, if the divorce has put them on the spiritual sideline forever, and if the dirty little secret of the domestic violence which they have endured is really their fault after all. They struggle with questions of identity and expectations; who they are in Christ, and what is expected of them. It is often an uncomfortable place to live. Adding to their

⁵Writer and conference speaker Lisa Bevere recounted that when in 1982 God called her into a ministry to women (one she was reluctant to take on) she felt God was saying to her, “. . . women all over are hurting.” Lisa Bevere, *The True Measure of a Woman* (Lake Mary: Charisma House, 1997), xii.

⁶Nancy Leigh Demoss, *Lies Women Believe* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2001), 16.

⁷*Ibid.*, 18.

angst is the unsettled feeling many have that standing before them is a preacher whom they suspect does not understand them and their unique struggles all that well.⁸ Many Christian women are in desperate need of help that only God can provide.

When the author was groping for input at the beginning of this study, he extended a written invitation to a small group of local (male) pastors he meets regularly with to see which, if any of them, had questions that might be answered in the preparation of this thesis. Though some offered a few lines of welcomed encouragement for the project, only one had any significant feedback. The author wondered if anyone thought whether deep deliberation on this subject was really needed.

For some pastors even the interest in studying how to better communicate God's Word to women smacks of infidelity to an emphasis on the Word. One pastor of a church who read the cover letter which was attached to the women's survey (Appendix D) and sent out over the internet wrote back and said, "Just be a saved man and act like it when you're in the pulpit . . . that'll cut your study way down and simplify your preaching."⁹ His message seemed to be just preach the Word and don't worry about this other stuff. He signed it, "In Christ and Happy."

Beverly Hislop, writing to encourage women to take up shepherding responsibility of other women in the local church wrote, "To be effective in shepherding women we must be responsive to a woman's gender specific characteristics, behaviors and needs. To do that, we must understand what those characteristics are and how they are unique to

⁸When asked for their opinion of the statement "Most male preachers I have listened to do not understand the life seasons, cycles and situations of the women in their audience," 46 percent said they agreed. See Appendix D, table 10.

⁹From an email the author received on December 21, 2004.

women.”¹⁰ If she believes that many women in the church are not being cared for properly in large part because there is a dearth of other women who understand the physiological, psychological and cognitive aspects of women, then how much more would that be true of men who seek to minister to them effectively? Though the need to more effectively communicate the Bible to women is there, the need may not be understood by a large number of male preachers.¹¹

Someone once said that if a fish were left to explain to someone what it was like to be a fish it would talk about everything except for the fact that it lives in water. That one confining fact would be so obvious and all-encompassing that it would be the one thing overlooked. Men who faithfully preach God’s Word on a weekly basis and seek to be used by him to bring a message of salvation and sanctifying grace to the people they love may need to be reminded of the obvious: They are men who have a decidedly male history of experiences and point-of-reference as they view the world in which they live and minister.

¹⁰Beverly White Hislop, *Shepherding a Woman’s Heart* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003), 58.

¹¹I remember the day Dr. Alice Mathews came to the Charlotte campus of Gordon Conwell Seminary to address the Doctor of Ministry class on the topic “Ministering to Women in our Churches.” One of the things she did was to ask the twenty male pastors in the room to suppose that one morning we woke up as a woman having to deal in a woman’s world. She asked us to ponder questions concerning aggression, child care, physical appearance (hair care!), roles of work and our marriage. She asked us to consider how we would react if all of a sudden we were physically weaker and less in control of our situation. If by some swift quirk of nature we were suddenly less respected and less valued because of our sex; if we were now the follower instead of the leader and had the high anxiety of wondering if our husbands were looking around at other women, could we cope? How would we cope? It seemed that communication between men and women was as much a cross cultural experience as was relating to an exchange student from Central America. I had always been under the impression that I, much more than other preachers I knew, had exhibited special consideration for women in my preaching, but this was something else. After hearing her, I knew I wanted to know more. I knew I *needed* to know more. So I thought, “*This would be a good topic for my thesis.*” Many times since I have wished that I had opted for a more familiar topic but I have learned much and been stretched during long periods of discomfort.

In the Mel Gibson movie, *What Women Want*, Gibson, through an impossible set of circumstances, is suddenly “gifted” with the miraculous ability to hear the innermost thoughts of the women he interacted with on a daily basis. The revelation is at first not only stunning but a cause for great alarm. He seeks out a psychiatrist (Bette Midler) who, after some comical cajoling, finally is convinced that the miraculous had indeed happened. After composing herself, she says to him, “There isn’t a single woman that I treat that doesn’t wish her man understood her better. If men are from Mars and women are from Venus and you speak Venusian . . . the world can be yours . . . imagine the possibilities . . . if you know what women want, you can rule.”¹²

The goal of the preacher is not to rule over the women under their care, but to be used by the Holy Spirit to let them allow the Heavenly Father to do so more effectively and intimately. To do that, male preachers must better understand the unique needs, characteristics, capacities, behaviors and sorrows of the women in their audience so that they can more effectively communicate God’s Word to them with a result of seeing positive change.¹³

One of the primary aspects of preparation that a preacher must bring to his task is understanding his audience.¹⁴ If he enters the pulpit with a lack of understanding of the flock to which he has been called to minister his effectiveness will be muted. The

¹²*What Women Want*, dir. Nancy Meyers, Paramount Pictures. Hollywood, CA: 2000, DVD.

¹³Pastor Frank Pollard writes that each Saturday morning he goes to the empty worship center of his church and for a time occupies the seat that a widow in his church usually occupies and thinks about her and “. . . what she may expect when she comes to worship.” He does this with other members of his congregation as well. He reports that it has changed the way he prays and preaches. Dudit, 135. Male preachers need to sit in the seat of the women in their audience for a time and consider their unique expectations, experiences and make-up.

¹⁴Haddon Robinson wrote, “An able shepherd knows his flock . . . to expound the Scriptures so the contemporary God confronts us where we live requires that the preacher study his audience as well as his Bible.” Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 78-79.

question is not whether the preacher firmly believes that God's Word is truth or that it is truth for both male and female; the question is how the male preacher can more effectively understand a large portion of his audience so that he may bring to bear God's truth to the challenges that face the women in this culture and in their congregations.

It must not be forgotten that in many more ways than they are different, men and women are alike. It cannot be lost that there is wide variation and individual differences among the class of females. The challenge is daunting. Says Alice Mathews:

Ministers who seek to be more effective in sharing God's Word with women face two types of challenge. First, they must understand, at least in part, the experience of women as women. Second, they must understand that the women who listen are not simply generic "women." Each woman is an individual who may be a woman and a business executive, or a woman of color, or a single woman living at home and caring for aging parents, or a woman who is divorced and receiving public assistance. She may be a stay-at-home mother with five children. Women are never generic; they are individuals with gender in common but with enormous differences between them. For a preacher, therefore, these differences are as significant as gender in the way each woman will hear the message being preached.¹⁵

Those who posit that men and women are so completely different, that it is as if they are from different planets, are overstating the case.¹⁶ Having said that, it is impossible to ignore a number of physiological, psychological and experiential differences between men and women which may impact how the Word is heard and received by women.¹⁷ There is much they have in common with men and yet there are real differences between men and women, and it is important that people do not deny those differences and the

¹⁵Mathews, 25.

¹⁶John Gray in his bestselling book, acknowledged that he made "... many generalizations about men and women ..." in the book. John Gray, *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992), xxxi.

¹⁷"We are different anatomically, hormonally, socially, sexually, psychologically and emotionally. God created men and women as two distinct pieces of a puzzle." Jean Lush, *Emotional Phases of a Woman's Life* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1987), 20; quoted by Hislop, 60.

uniqueness that each brings to life experience. God has created human beings as male and female. Collectively they come together to reflect the image of God on earth.¹⁸

Effective pastoral care to women incorporates the scriptural concepts that women and men are of equal value and women's femininity is equally vital and necessary (as is man's masculinity) in the human task of imaging God; that women are equally capable and responsible to manage their lives in obedience to the will of God, that equal in value does not require sameness in characteristic behavior or need . . . Healthy shepherding encourages a woman to value, even highlight her femininity, her uniqueness as a woman in God's family.¹⁹

The purpose of this thesis is not to discuss theological questions concerning women in the pulpit or to speak about a woman's role in local church activity, but to offer suggestions on how a male preacher can more effectively relate the sermon to women as a segment of his audience. This thesis will try to show the similarities and differences that are present in men and women (including general life experience) and how those things impact both the hearing of the Word for the women in their audience and the preparation and delivery of it for the preacher.

Gender Issues That Can Trip Up A Preacher

Understanding gender differences that impact preaching calls for discerning carefully what is or is not true of men and women. The tendency of some is to exaggerate differences; the tendency of others is to deny all gender differences. Both are errors that can mislead the preacher. Failure to understand what is a true difference in the three areas of physiology, psychology, and epistemology can cause the preacher to miss the opportunity to communicate effectively to all of his listeners.

¹⁸It is true that not all women think or react like all other women. The same is true for men. But the generalities *are* out there. As someone once said to me, "Generalities become that way since they are generally true . . . but not always."

¹⁹Hislop, 76.

Women's Physiology

While one must walk gingerly in the field of gender research and testing,²⁰ there are physiological differences (beyond the simple, observable and anatomical) between males and females that in turn impact gender (and ultimately how the Word may be heard). They are observed even by those who were raised in an environment to believe such differences were minimal or even non-existent (beyond obvious anatomical distinctions).²¹

The dialogue on gender roles has become so highly charged with emotion and political overtones that one wonders if there are many forums left where a free discussion can even take place. Although past history would give credence to feminist suspicions in sex difference research,²² even the mention of distinctions beyond biological construct is anathema in many circles today.²³

Doreen Kimura, Professor of Psychology at Simon Fraser University, believes the field of gender studies has been tainted in recent years by those who refuse to recognize

²⁰Gay Hubbard insists that gender research is never objective. She wrote, "It is a myth to believe that science is carried out by rational objective searchers for truth, who are uninfluenced by the world around them." Gay M. Hubbard, *Women: The Misunderstood Majority* (Waco: Word, 1992), 100.

²¹Deborah Blum states that she was reared ". . . in one of those university-based, liberal-elite families that politicians like to make fun of. In my childhood, every human being – regardless of gender – was exactly alike . . ." Yet she admits, "It wasn't until I became a parent – I should say, a parent of two boys – that I realized I had been fed a line and swallowed it like a sucker . . ." Deborah Blum, *Sex on the Brain* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), xiii.

²²Steven Rhoads shows that until recently, arguments about sex differences were often linked to claims about the inferiority of women. One prominent nineteenth-century social psychologist declared that ". . . all psychologists who have studied the intelligence of women . . . recognize today that they represent the most inferior forms of human evolution and that they are closer to children and savages than to an adult civilized male." Hilary Lips, *Sex and Gender* (Mountain View: Mayfield Publishing Co. 2004), 170; quoted by Steven Rhoads, *Taking Sex Differences Seriously* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2004), 20.

²³In 2004 Harvard University president Lawrence H. Summers insinuated that men may be more adept at mathematics than women. The resulting tumult lasted for months and many believe it led to his eventual resignation. Sam Dillon, "Harvard Chief Defends His Talk on Women," *New York Times*, 18 January 2005.

facts in order to support a befuddled egalitarian dogma which confuses equal treatment before the law with the claim that all people are in fact equal.²⁴ Despite the fact that no one would suggest that people are equal in areas of health, strength, mental capacity, or temperament, she says a disproportionate number of social scientists still believe that all people would in fact be equal if raised in the same environment with similar exposure to education, nurture and opportunity.²⁵ Deborah Blum and Kimura strongly believe, along with most evolutionary biologists, that gender roles in our culture reflect an underlying biology that is fixed.²⁶ Even they however, as biologicalists, seem to give grudging acceptance to the notion that gender identity is a somewhat complicated confluence of factors.²⁷

Geneticist Anne Moir, writing with David Jessel, also believes that men and women are fundamentally different with generally fixed natures.²⁸ From bedroom to boardroom,

²⁴Doreen Kimura, *Sex and Cognition* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 3. Kimura believes that the discussion has been taken over by ideologues who hold firmly to their position that nurture accounts for the bulk of differences between the sexes, despite a series of studies in diverse fields that strongly suggest that nature has an enormous effect upon cognition and behavioral differences.

²⁵Marianne Van Den Wijngaard notes that Germaine Greer's argument against biological determinism outlined in her influential 1970 book, *The Female Eunuch* represented the dominant feminist position on the differences in male and female behavior and social inequalities. Greer largely countered biological arguments with sociological explanations for sex differences in behavior. Marianne Van Den Wijngaard, *Reinventing the Sexes* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 47.

²⁶Kimura, 15. Blum also asserts, in an apparent nod to the fact that men and women do often (and to her it seems inexplicably) act in ways that are contrary to their "fixed" natures, that "... life in turn can influence whatever genetic tapestry we bring into the world." Blum, 20. She says, "Our question about the role of nature versus nurture forms a circle in which one influence feeds the other and around it comes again." Blum, 77.

²⁷Alice Mathews said, "Biology is never irrelevant. But neither is it determinant. For each person-male and female-body, mind, behavior, history, and environment interact in unique ways. No two people emerge with exactly the same gender identities." Mathews, 27.

²⁸"They are equal only in their common membership of the same species, humankind. To maintain that they are the same in aptitude, skill or behavior is to build a society based on a biological and scientific lie." Anne Moir, David Jessel, *Brain Sex* (New York: Delta Publishing, 1991), 5. They believe that many have denied an intuitive sense of differences that for millennia have been considered truisms and that people are what they are not primarily due to social-conditioning but because it is the way they were made.

from schoolyard to workplace, Moir and Jessel believe that men and women are different because their brains are different. They therefore process information distinctly resulting in different perceptions, priorities, and behavior. Steven Rhoads concurs saying, “. . . sex differences are large, deeply rooted and consequential . . . they won’t disappear unless we tinker with our fundamental biological natures.”²⁹ A number of the differences cited by these and others in the scientific community have led many to consider these differences to be presuppositional to the study of gender issues.³⁰ They would argue that many of the differences between men and women are present from conception.

Males seem to have superiority in certain special abilities outperforming girls from a young age in mathematics, which involve abstract concepts of space, relationships and

²⁹Rhoads, 4, 5. In his introduction, he cites a fascinating 1966 case where a botched circumcision on one of two identical twins left one of the twins without a penis. At 22 months, the toddler was castrated and the parents were persuaded by Dr. John Money of John Hopkins University to raise the child as a female. Named Brenda, the child was aggressively treated like a girl by her parents and given female steroids to “. . . facilitate and mimic female pubertal growth and feminization.” Milton Diamond, *Archives of Sexual Behavior: Sexual Identity, Monozygotic Twins Reared in Discordant Sex Roles and a BBC Follow-Up*, (1982), 11; quoted by Rhoads, 1. Originally, the story picked up by Time magazine cited the case as evidence that “. . . conventional patterns of masculine and feminine behavior can be altered.” A number of psychology and sociology text books used the case to argue that sex roles are basically learned. Twenty years later, “Brenda” was “David,” a married, father of three adopted children who worked in a slaughterhouse. At age 14, she started living and acting like a boy. When at age 15 Brenda was told of her biological past, she announced that she had always felt like a male. It later came out that David had always exhibited typical male behavior even when everyone told him he was a female and should act like one. A subsequent study done by John Hopkins on 25 males between the ages of five and sixteen who had been born without penis (and were subsequently castrated and raised as girls) found that “. . . every single one exhibited the rough-and-tumble play more characteristic of boys than girls.” Fourteen of the group had declared themselves boys (one as young as five). Rhoades believes that testosterone has a permanent “organizational effect,” on the brain. He quotes Dr. Margaret Legato, an expert on sex differentiation and professor at Columbia University: “When the brain has been masculinized by exposure to testosterone [in the womb], it is kind of useless to say to the individual, ‘you’re a girl.’ It is this impact of testosterone that gives males the feelings that they are men.” (Legato confirmed by phone the accuracy of news story quotation.) Rhoads, 3.

³⁰In spite of that insistence there are a number of notable exceptions. Gay Hubbard, in her influential book, believes that most sex-based differences as presently measured are “. . . influenced powerfully by gender-based factors, including the social context in which they are expressed . . . The controversy revolves less around known facts than around what we want the facts to be and what we want them to mean.” Hubbard, 138.

theory, while females seem to do better at computation.³¹ Males seem to possess superior eye-hand coordination, have an advantage in certain motor skills, and score consistently higher than women in a number of studies that concern targeting skills and spatial orientation (although some dispute this).³² Males also seem better at things that require fine motor skills.³³ The presence of high levels of female hormone released during adolescence seems to widen the gap and depress the skills in women that men seem to be better at even further while, at the same time, enhancing skills that women seem to be better at.³⁴ Although there is debate, women do seem to have an edge when tested in verbal ability and may have a significantly better time at tasks that require verbal memory.³⁵ Females see better in the dark and react more quickly than men to pain. They have a more acute sense of smell, taste and sound (high pitches). Many of these differences appear so early on that conditioning could not have played a major role.³⁶

³¹Kimura, 67-78. Kimura gives a compelling counter-argument to Hubbard's contention that math differences can be traced to socialization factors such as teacher and parent expectations. Simon Baron-Cohen believes that genes may play a role in systematizing, which may account for sex differences in this area. He cites a study on mathematical ability found in twins (one of the clearest examples of systematizing) which shows that identical twins are more alike in their mathematical ability than are non-identical twins. Children with developmental dyscalculia were born "not to count." These children are of normal intelligence and are sociable but cannot systematize for genetic reasons. Simon Baron-Cohen, *The Essential Difference* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 112.

³²Hubbard cites an older 1974 study done by Maccoby and Jacklin that supports her contention of only minor differences in this area. Hubbard, 131-134.

³³Kimura, 53. Kimura shows that tests conducted in the areas of targeting and spatial orientation reveal sex differences favoring males which sometimes approaches a full standard deviation.

³⁴Moir and Jessel, 93.

³⁵While some attribute testing discrepancies to nurture, Kimura says, "While we would not deny that experience contributes something to individual differences, we must be cautious in inferring that the experience determines the abilities. It may be the other way around." Kimura, 6.

³⁶Moir and Jessel, 54. See also Kimura, 170. Rhoads cites studies that come to similar conclusions. Rhoads writes that four-month old girls were shown to be able to distinguish photographs of those they know from strangers while boys were not. Five-month old boys were shown to have an interest in three dimensional geometric forms and in blinking lights to a much greater extent than girls. Rhoads, 24, 25.

The female brain seems to be organized to respond more sensitively to all external sensory stimuli.³⁷ Females, only hours after birth, were observed to be more sensitive than males to touch.³⁸ Girls were more easily comforted by soothing words and singing and seem to understand the emotional content of language.³⁹ Blum cites studies done by New York University psychologist Martin Hoffman (who has studied the emotional responses of day-old infants) who found that females responded consistently more intensely to the sound of another in distress.⁴⁰ Although both sexes respond to another's distress, girls are more attuned to an empathetic response.⁴¹

Females also have been shown to be far more adept at reading facial and body expressions indicating that they are better at picking up social cues and may be better judges of character than men.⁴² The differences observed continue with maturity going

³⁷Moir and Jessel, 17.

³⁸Moir and Jessel wrote, "Tests between the sexes of tactile sensitivity in the hands and fingers produce differences so striking that sometimes male and female scores do not even overlap, the most sensitive boy feeling less than the least sensitive girl." 55.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Hoffman said that this early reaction would, "... run like an underground stream through their entire lives." Martin Hoffman, "Sex Differences in Empathy and Related Behaviors," *Psychological Bulletin*, 84: 712-722; quoted by Blum, 66. Baron-Cohen notes that this empathetic response to distress is found at the "... other end of the age range, ..." where far more women than men respond that they frequently share the emotional distress of their friends. Women tend to show more comforting behavior, even among strangers, than do men. Baron-Cohen, 31.

⁴¹Simon Baron-Cohen believes that from the earliest stages of development boys show "... less empathy and are more self centered." He notes that, even by the age of three, studies seem to indicate that girls are already ahead of boys in their ability to infer what other people might be thinking or intending; what he calls the "cognitive component of empathy." Baron-Cohen, 29.

⁴²Blum, 78. Simon Baron-Cohen and his associate developed a test to measure empathy in which the person is presented with photographs of facial expressions of emotions - but only the section of the face around the eyes are revealed. Around each photograph were four descriptive words. The people were then asked to pick the word which described what the person in the picture was feeling or thinking. Women were found to be consistently more accurate in choosing the right word than the men tested. Their results supported the findings of the most well known test of sensitivity to non-verbal cues of emotions (The Profile of Nonverbal Sensitivity Test - PONS) where women, more accurately than the men tested, identified the emotions pictured by photographs of actors that were shown to them. The results of the

beyond the rough and tumble: The chasing, climbing, constant motion of little boys as opposed to the less physical play of girls.⁴³

Physical brain differences between men and women have long been noted, from brain size⁴⁴ to the fact that there are observable differences in the hypothalamus region, hippocampal complex, and in right/left growth patterns. This may give a clue as to organizational patterns and functional differences.⁴⁵ Women appear to have a larger area of connective fibers between the two hemispheres of the brain “. . . making it probable that communication between their hemispheres is facilitated.”⁴⁶ Studies suggest that men may be more lateralized in their brain use; that is, they rely on one hemisphere or the other in completing a task while a woman may use both.⁴⁷ If these theories, based on

PONS study were reflected in countries as diverse as New Guinea, Israel, and Australia as well as in North America. Baron-Cohen, 32.

⁴³It was observed that, when looking at pictures of passengers in a vehicle the small boys' attention focused largely on the vehicle while the girls focused on the passengers inside. One study showed that, when a new toy was introduced into nursery school, the boys became animated while the girls showed more curiosity when a new child was introduced. Rhoads, 24. Baron-Cohen notes studies that show from toddler age on boys seem to gravitate toward mechanical play (for example with toy cars), and construction play (building with blocks), and toward toys with clear functions (with buttons to press) than do girls. These same patterns were noted in pre-industrial societies. Baron-Cohen, 69, 70.

⁴⁴Men's brains are larger and heavier than women's by 10 to 15 percent. Kimura, 127. Simon Baron-Cohen observes that even when the ratio of brain to body size is taken into account, by comparing men and women of the same height, men's brains are still heavier. Baron-Cohen, 112.

⁴⁵Christos Davatzikos and Susan M. Resnick, "Sex Differences in Anatomic Measures of Interhemispheric Connectivity: Correlations with Cognition in Women but not Men," *Oxford Journals, Cerebral Cortex* Vol. 8, no. 7, (Oct/Nov 1998), 635-640, <http://cercor.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/8/7/635> (accessed December 15, 2006). See also Kimura, 129. Baron-Cohen notes that post-mortem examinations reveal that men's brains have, on the average, about four billion more neurons in the cortex than the average women, which he believes may lead to a greater attention to detail and better systematizing. It may also lead to a slower grasp of the overall picture. Baron-Cohen, 112.

⁴⁶Kimura, 160.

⁴⁷Davatzikos and Resnick, 635. See also Blum, 46.

recent testing⁴⁸ are true, “If the left brain handles language and the right brain handles emotions, then women would be better at expressing emotions and pulling everything together, whereas men would be more disconnected.”⁴⁹ Men may find it more of a challenge in expressing emotion. That integration may also mean that a woman is less able to separate emotion from reason.⁵⁰

While observing differences in brain structure (which itself is determined by the action of sex hormones) as one reason for differing aptitudes and abilities in men and women, many strongly believe that the evidence is overwhelming that the hormonal environment, the degree and timing of male and female hormones introduced into the body, goes a long way in determining whether the child will exhibit typical male or female behavioral patterns.⁵¹ It may also determine whether they will exhibit cognitive patterns found to be *generally* sex-specific.

The male or female brain is not just a matter of genes, but a matter of hormones that developing bodies make or which surround the pre-born in the womb.⁵² Doreen Kimura states, “Human cognitive patterns and their related brain organization are apparently

⁴⁸Recent work has tapped functional MRIs — scanning devices that measure blood flow and activity in the brains of conscious subjects seems to show that more information can be exchanged between the two sides of a woman’s brain. Drs. Ruben and Raquel Gur at the University of Pennsylvania have shown that women’s brains light up in more areas than men’s brains when given verbal and spatial tasks. This feature, they argue, may enhance women’s ability to focus on many tasks at once. Amanda Onion “Scientists Find Sex Differences in Brain” *ABC News Internet Ventures*, January 19, 2005, <http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/print?id=424260> (accessed September 7, 2006).

⁴⁹Blum, 47.

⁵⁰Hislop, 59. Based upon her years of counseling, she believes that women may generally be wired to put feelings before thought. This does not mean that women cannot think logically and systematically, but the order of processing may be different from a man’s. Says Hislop, “A woman cannot easily think about the options until she has worked through her feelings.” 71.

⁵¹Kiruma, 107.

⁵²Moir and Jessel state, “The die is cast in utero; that’s when the mind is made up, and the luggage of our bodies, and of society’s expectations of us, merely supplements this basic biological fact of life.” Moir and Jessel, 36.

permanently influenced by physiological events that take place by the fourth fetal month.”⁵³ Many have observed the effect to be far reaching. Hormonal changes do affect men,⁵⁴ but most agree that it particularly affects women where they have enormous physiological impact for the duration of their lives.⁵⁵ Hislop says that these must be understood since they can bring about “emotional uncertainties.”⁵⁶ Estrogen and progesterone levels have critical and lasting effects on a female brain and on every aspect of her life and activities.⁵⁷ “Monthly hormone changes are a regular consideration in understanding women.”⁵⁸

But, hormones and brain structure alone do not tell the whole story. The answer lies on how the hormones interplay between the male and female brains; brains which were “pre-wired” specifically to react with them.⁵⁹ Moir and Jessel ascribe “basic biology” for their belief that the brains of each sex are generally better suited to different tasks.⁶⁰ Kimura believes one can make reasonable predictions about entire groups based on this notion.⁶¹ Moir and Jessel contend that, with the amount of research being done in the

⁵³Kimura, 177.

⁵⁴Alice Mathews has stated in conversation with the author that “Women cycle through hormone changes monthly, but men’s testosterone goes up and down hourly or daily with more impact on behavior.”

⁵⁵Hislop, 61.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Gail Sheehy interview with Dr. Barbara Sherwin. *New Passages: Mapping Your Life Across Time* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995), 220.

⁵⁸Hislop, 61.

⁵⁹Moir and Jessel, 80.

⁶⁰Ibid., 88.

⁶¹Although Kimura goes so far as to say that it is possible to make predictions about groups as a whole, she cautions that each person’s intellectual makeup is unique and that people need to be evaluated

past few decades, we now have scientific backing for some historic stereotypes.⁶² They believe it is the reason why there has always been a marked difference in choice of occupation between men and women with women consistently preferring more person-oriented occupations than men.

But, while the author thinks it is undeniable that there are certain observable generalities directly attributed to biology which strongly affect gender,⁶³ preachers need to be careful not to ignore the fact that they may be the product of generations of slightly bent thinking concerning the gender differences between men and women. If they conclude that all women are the same and have been prefabricated to act and react in one way, while all men act in another, they may end up interpreting God's Word in ways that may not be proper.⁶⁴ Alice Mathews cautions, "Unfortunately, failure to recognize powerful social differences between women and men can result in failure to communicate truth at a level that reaches people's lives."⁶⁵

as individuals and not as a member of a particular group. She acknowledges that hormonal mechanisms vary according to the season, time of day, one's hormonal environment early in life, as well as other variables (menstruation; introduction of hormones into the body, etc.). Kimura, 105-122.

⁶²"The way our brains are made affects how we think, learn, see, smell, feel, communicate, love, make love, fight, succeed, or fail." Moir and Jessel, 20. They say "Cultural influences may reinforce these strengths, but the advantages are innate." Ibid., 17. Said Rhoads, "Neither Israeli kibbutzim nor U.S. communes have had any success in abolishing . . . sex role, although many have made doing so their highest priority." Rhoads, 26.

⁶³Gay Hubbard says that sex and gender are not synonymous terms. "Sex is defined as a biological construct, and reserved for reference to differences in reproductive structures, chromosomes, hormones, and physical features In contrast gender is used to refer to the social, cultural, and psychological components associated with masculinity and femininity. Sex is assumed to be biologically determined; gender is assumed to be socially learned." Hubbard, 118.

⁶⁴When the author attended Bible College, a textbook still in use intimated that since black people descended from Ham they were cursed. This argument was used for many years to buttress a "biblical" argument for the inferiority of the race and for slavery. Our culture can indeed affect the way we think and so interpret the Word of God.

⁶⁵Mathews, 17.

Women's Psychology

Another area with which male preachers need to become more familiar is the study of women's psychology, which is a relatively recent field in the science of psychology. Since Freudian theory became gospel, mentally healthy women (whom he believed never fully resolve their Oedipus complex) have been viewed as ones who were “. . . passive, dependent, childlike, and resigned to her biologically inferior status.”⁶⁶ Freud viewed women as morally underdeveloped as compared to males.⁶⁷ Psychologist Carol Gilligan believes that, over time, most women become accustomed to seeing life through a man's eyes,⁶⁸ adopting the male life experience as “normal” and succumb to those who wish to “. . . fashion women out of a masculine cloth.”⁶⁹ She believes that this is true of most psychological theorists including her mentor, ethicist Lawrence Kohlberg, whose conclusions on moral development were based exclusively on interviews with males.⁷⁰ As far back as Freud, theorists have built psychological theories based upon the experiences of male children and adults.

⁶⁶Hislop, 64.

⁶⁷Freud wrote that women “. . . show less sense of justice than men; that they are less ready to submit to the great exigencies of life, that they are more often influenced in their judgments by feelings of affection or hostility.” *Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes* 1925 vol. XIX as quoted by Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 7.

⁶⁸In recent years, a number of feminist authors have attacked Gilligan's work and methodology. See Christina Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 151-156.

⁶⁹Gilligan 6.

⁷⁰His initial studies were based on interviews over a twenty year period of eighty-four boys.

Gilligan came to believe that Kohlberg's studies on the stages of moral development⁷¹ completely missed a distinctively female voice on matters of morality and that moral development proceeded in more than one direction.⁷²

The acceptance of results based upon the male model found their way into mainstream thought both establishing and entrenching certain cultural stereotypes concerning women.⁷³ These stereotypes which, if women *themselves* believe to be normative,⁷⁴ may negatively impact self-competency and rob them (and men) of becoming all they were intended by God to be.⁷⁵ Some see the church as playing a significant part in the dilemma.⁷⁶

⁷¹For a succinct explanation of Kohlberg's findings see, W.C. Crain, "Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development" *Theories of Development* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1985), 118-136.

⁷²While one line (male) focuses on logic, justice, and social organization, the other (female) focuses on interpersonal relationships. Because of these differences, according to Gilligan, men and women frequently score at different stages on Kohlberg's scale. Women typically score at stage three, with its focus on interpersonal feelings, whereas men more commonly score at stages four and five, which reflect more abstract conceptions of social organization. Thus, women scored lower than men. But, she contends that women would show developmental depth beyond stage three if Kohlberg's scale were more sensitive to women's distinctly interpersonal orientations.

⁷³Gilligan cites studies by Inge Broverman which found that the qualities deemed necessary for adulthood, "... the capacity for autonomous thinking, clear decision-making, and responsible action – are those qualities associated with masculinity and considered undesirable as attributes of the feminine self." Gilligan, 17. Referring to Broverman's conclusion, Mathews writes "A woman ... could not be a healthy woman and a healthy adult at the same time because a healthy adult rating corresponded to masculine characteristics." Mathews, 57.

⁷⁴When asked (see Appendix D, table 32) to chose from a few of the most frequently selected character traits on the Boverman list of male and female characteristics, the women surveyed selected five characteristics stereotypically listed as male of their top ten choices. Over half of the women responding to the women's survey felt that they did not conform to what a traditional feminine woman is supposed to be.

⁷⁵Mathews, 59.

⁷⁶Hubbard sees the religious community often as the source of injury to women. She believes that the church is rife with misbeliefs about women; misbeliefs which by their presence "... prevent women from being valued and respected as equals within the family of God." Hubbard, 23, 241.

A problem in theory was seen as a problem in a women's development which was located in their experience of relationships.⁷⁷ Nancy Chodorow, relying on other studies on gender identity, attributes almost universal views of roles for men and women as being rooted, not so much in physiology, as to the fact that women are largely responsible for early child care. This results in the fact, she argues, that, ". . . in any given society, feminine personality comes to define itself in relation and connection to other people more than masculine personality does."⁷⁸ As a result, females come out of early childhood with "empathy" built into their definition of self that boys do not.⁷⁹

Studies by Janet Lever concluded that boys in their play, learn organizational skills and how to deal with competition within the framework of rules while the play of girls fosters empathy and sensitivity.⁸⁰ Erik Erickson described the male identity as forged in

⁷⁷Gilligan, 7.

⁷⁸Nancy Chodorow, *Family Structure and Feminine Personality*. In M. Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere, eds., *Woman, Culture and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 43-44, quoted by Gilligan, 7.

⁷⁹"Girls emerge with a stronger basis for experiencing another's needs or feelings as one's own . . . " While gender identity with boys is tied to separation, for girls it is more closely identified through attachment. Indeed, whereas ". . . male gender identity is threatened by intimacy . . . female gender identity is threatened by separation." Ibid., 8. Thus, the female failure to separate as the male does (naturally) was unjustly looked upon as a failure to develop properly as a human being. Little girls and women see a world comprised of relationships and connectedness rather than people standing alone adhering to a system of rules.

⁸⁰Gilligan finds evidence of this through Janet Lever's studies (based upon renowned child psychologist, Jean Piaget's work) concerning children and play. Boys, in contrast to girls, tended to play out of doors in large heterogeneous groups engaging in extended competitive games. Boys appeared to be able to resolve disputes more easily and effectively than girls (seemingly enjoying the legal debate concerning nuance of rules and regulations) while disputes among girls tended to end the game. Girls tended to subordinate the continuation of the game in favor of the continuation of the relationship. Piaget observed the females attitude towards rules and their willingness to "make exceptions" and determined that the moral development in females, ". . . is far less developed in little girls than in boys." Jean Piaget, *The Moral Judgment of the Child* (New York: The Free Press, 1965), 77 as quoted by Gilligan, 10. Lever came to believe that the male model is superior since it lends itself better to success in business. "Lever implies that, given the realities of adult life, if a girl does not want to be left dependent on men, she will have to learn to play like a boy." Gilligan, 10. Masculine values prevail so that as Virginia Wolfe notes, ". . . women come to question the normality of their feelings and to alter their judgments in deference to the opinion of other." Gilligan, 16.

relation to the world and female as awakened in a relationship of intimacy with another person.⁸¹ She begins to come to know herself “. . . as she is known through her relationships with others.”⁸²

One result is that men and women may perceive danger and aggression differently. Often, men perceive danger in conjunction with connection (relationally) and women in separation and competitiveness (which they may perceive as separating). Aggression is tied for the women to the fracture of human connection.⁸³ They feel a deep responsibility for others and see autonomy, and not attachment as dangerous⁸⁴ and care giving as an activity that will make the world a safer place since it negates isolation and prevents aggression.

It is no wonder that most women feel this way, since they have been singularly designated by God to be life-bearers⁸⁵ in a way men will never experience. To them, “. . .

⁸¹Ibid., 13.

⁸²Ibid., 12. It is the stuff that fairy tales are made of. Women not only come to define themselves in a context of human relationship, but also judge themselves in terms of their ability to extend care. Extended into adulthood, women's concept of morality (which is less about a focus on individual achievement and personal autonomy and more about concern for relationship, connectedness and interdependence based upon a more contextual mode of judgment) came to be looked at as a human weakness, a sign of stunted maturity rather than a strength. Women seem to respond to dilemmas with an ethic of care and connectedness rather than with a judgment based on logic and law. Yet these differences, along the lines of the continuity of relationships, appeared as “problematic” to Kohlberg and others.

⁸³A common theme in interviews with women is the desire not to hurt others. It is tied to a morality that seeks to resolve conflict which in turn assures that people will not be hurt. The truly moral person will seek to help and serve others; it is a sense of responsibility to others. Studies by Norma Haan (1975) and Constance Holstein (1976) seem to indicate that, “. . . the moral judgments of women differ from those of men in the greater extent to which women's judgments are tied to feelings of empathy and compassion . . .” Gilligan, 69.

⁸⁴Ibid., 48.

⁸⁵Steven Rhoads says, “Having children may not be central to a woman's happiness, but most mothers think it is.” He recounts the testimony of women past childbearing years who speak of “. . . deep regret . . . aching loss . . .” and “. . . deep grief” (quoting Hewlett in Rhoads) for having made the choice years before to pursue a career and eliminate children from the picture. And yet the nurturing tendencies

relationship is a primary concern”⁸⁶ Men seem to struggle more with problems related to career than they do problems at home. Hislop, quoting Jim Smith, wrote “. . . a man can tolerate a fairly low degree of marital happiness if his career is moving forward. Women cannot.”⁸⁷ The theme of relationship is so prominent in the Bible because it is only within the context of relationship that the deepest needs of the human personality are met.⁸⁸ Men that neglect relationship appear to be poorer because of it.

Yet there are dangers. A woman’s concern for relationship may result in shying away from hard moral choices since hard moral stances may result in introducing pain to relationships. Some women are reluctant to take on controversial issues (especially if relationships have suffered in the past) and will “. . . make exceptions all the time.”⁸⁹ They may even choose isolation over moral confrontation. In fact, many are uncertain if they even have a right to make moral statements or may be unwilling to do so for fear of judgment and abandonment from others. The great danger is that women may come to accept, as truth, the thought that if they press a belief and live a life of moral absolutes, it will do injury to relationships which their heart instinctively tells them to shield.⁹⁰

The resulting inner conflicts may be one reason why, for many years, women have

which are seen in female children, (in all cultures and in all times) are present early on, accelerated in puberty by hormonal release. Rhoads, 191, 192.

⁸⁶Hislop, 66.

⁸⁷Jim Smith, *Counseling Men, Counseling Women*, in Archibald D. Hart, Gary L. Gulbranson, and Jim Smith, eds., *Mastering Pastoral Counseling* (Bend, Ore.: Mulnomah Press and Christianity Today, Inc., 1992) 110-121; quoted by Hislop, 67.

⁸⁸Larry Crabb, *The Marriage Builder* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 20.

⁸⁹Gilligan, 66.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 138. Many women struggle with the very notion of self-development as tantamount to abandoning the virtues of a primary ethic of responsibility and care. Some see no way of exercising control over their own lives without appearing to be selfish and hurtful. In doing so, they find themselves on truly dangerous moral ground by not taking responsibility for their own lives.

been the major consumers of counseling services⁹¹ and suffer major depression in their lives in numbers twice that of men by the mid-adolescence.⁹² This two-to-one ratio exists regardless of racial and ethnic background or economic status and has been reported in at least ten other countries.⁹³ Symptoms may include persistent sad or anxious moods, restlessness, difficulty concentrating, sleeping, or remembering coupled with feelings of guilt, worthlessness and hopelessness.⁹⁴ Depression is always accompanied by a loss of self-esteem.⁹⁵ Before adolescence, there is little difference in the rate of depression in boys and girls, but between the ages of eleven and thirteen there is a precipitous rise in depression rates for girls. By age fifteen, females are twice as likely to have experienced a major depressive episode than males.⁹⁶

This comes at a time in adolescence when roles and expectations change dramatically. The problem seems to be getting worse.⁹⁷ The anxiety produced by

⁹¹Hubbard, 1.

⁹²National Institute of Mental Health, Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, *Depression: What Every Women Should Know* (Bethesda: NIMH, 2000), 7 <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/depwomenknows.cfm> (accessed July 11, 2005).

⁹³Weissman M.M., Bland R.C., Canino G.J., Faravelli C., Greenwald S., Hwu H.G., Joyce P.R., Karam E.G., Lee C.K., Lellouch J., Lepine J.P., Newman S.C., Rubin-Stiper M., Wells J.E., Wickramaratne P.J., Wittchen H., and Yeh E.K., "Cross-national epidemiology of major depression and bipolar disorder," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 276 (1996): 293-9, quoted by the National Institute of Mental Health, *Depression*, 6.

⁹⁴Ibid., 3, 4.

⁹⁵Mathews, 53.

⁹⁶Steven Rhoads links looser attitudes in sexual conduct to a dramatic increase in incidences of depression, feelings of worthlessness and insecurity in females. Studies have shown that since the start of the sexual revolution (determined to be 1970), women are more than twice as likely to be depressed as men. There is also evidence of an increasing rage on the part of many women toward men beginning in adolescence. Rhoads argues that women have a different emotional and psychological make up than men and so a different sexual make up. Both men and women find the most satisfying relationships within the committed confines of marriage. Rhoads, 118.

⁹⁷Steven Rhoads says that since 1976 the "happiness index" of female high school seniors has been trending downward, whereas for young men of the same age it has risen slightly. Rhoads, 107.

forming an identity, emerging sexuality, separating from parents, and making independent decisions for the first time, along with other physical, intellectual, and hormonal changes, all converge to add increasing stress to young lives. The National Institute of Mental Health cites fatigue, loneliness, time and relationship pressures, reproductive, hormonal, genetic (and other biological factors), abuse, oppression, as well as interpersonal and certain psychological and personality characteristics, as factors in developing depression.⁹⁸ These stresses are generally different for boys and girls, and may be associated more often with depression in females.⁹⁹

Studies show that female high school students have significantly higher rates of depression, anxiety disorders, eating disorders,¹⁰⁰ and adjustment disorders than male students, who have higher rates of disruptive behavior disorders.¹⁰¹ The pressure to achieve a measure of health and beauty (which are often linked) as defined by the culture has had devastating effects on young women.¹⁰²

A 2005 U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention survey found that, nationally, 37 percent of girls in grades 9-12 said that they felt hopeless for at least two

⁹⁸National Institute of Mental Health, *Depression*, 6.

⁹⁹Mary Pipher believes that girls today are under more stress than previous generations and that they “. . . have less varied and effective coping strategies to deal with that stress, and they have fewer internal and external resources on which to rely.” Mary Pipher, *Reviving Ophelia* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994), 158.

¹⁰⁰Pipher draws a picture of the agony most young girls go through as they compare their own bodies to the cultural ideals and find themselves wanting. When she goes to a college campus and asks if anyone has a friend with an eating disorder every hand goes up. Pipher, 185. Pipher says, “In all the years I’ve been a therapist, I’ve yet to meet one girl who likes her body.” 184.

¹⁰¹National Institute of Mental Health, *Depression*, 7.

¹⁰²“Today health and slimness seem to be almost synonymous.” Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, *After Eden* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Erdmann’s Publishing Company, 1993), 269.

weeks during the previous year as compared with 20 percent of boys.¹⁰³ Most Christian counselors who have been involved in ministering to women for a generation would not be surprised by those numbers.¹⁰⁴ Women report experiencing symptoms of depression most often when there is disruption or conflict in a close personal relationship¹⁰⁵ (from which many may receive a large measure of their personal identity).¹⁰⁶ Men often report being depressed because of the loss of an ideal or an achievement-related goal or because of performance issues.¹⁰⁷

Furthermore, there is the subject of physical and sexual abuse of women. The preacher must educate himself on not only the devastating effect abuse has on women but on the staggering widespread reality of it. Estimates range from 960,000 incidents of violence against a current or former spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend per year¹⁰⁸ to three million women who are physically abused by their husband or boyfriend each year.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Youth at Risk Behavior Survey 2005 as cited in *USA Today*, June 29, 2006, 1.

¹⁰⁴James Dobson states, “Perhaps the most inescapable conclusion I have drawn from psychological counseling of women concerns the commonness of depression and emotional apathy as a recurring fact of life.” James Dobson, *What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women* (Wheaton: Tyndale Publisher Inc. 1975), 15.

¹⁰⁵Fifty-seven percent of the women responding to the women’s survey (Appendix D, table 4) said that they get depressed “when conflicts arise or disruption occurs in a close personal relationship.”

¹⁰⁶Mathews notes, “When mental health researchers G. L. Klerman and M. M. Weissman reviewed all the literature on depression research in women and tested for factors ranging from genetics to PMS to birth control pills, they found only two prime factors for female depression, low social status and/or marriage” Mathews, 60.

¹⁰⁷Dana Crowley Jack, *Silencing the Self: Women and Depression* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 6. Cited by Mathews, 53.

¹⁰⁸U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Statistics Factbook, *Violence by Intimates (March 1998)*, by Lawrence A. Greenfeld (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998), www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/vi.pdf (accessed July 14, 2006)

¹⁰⁹Karen Scott Collins, Cathy Schoen, Susan Joseph, The Commonwealth Fund, *Health Concerns Across a Woman’s Lifespan: 1998 Survey of Women’s Health* (The Commonwealth Fund, May 1999), http://www.cmf.org/publications/publications_show.htm?doc_id=221554 (accessed June 7, 2006).

Intimate partner violence is, overwhelmingly, a crime against women. In 2001, women accounted for 85 percent of the victims of intimate partner violence (588,490 total) and men accounted for approximately 15 percent of the victims (103, 220 total).¹¹⁰

Diane M. Stuart, director of the office on Violence Against Women (a branch of the U.S. Department of Justice), testified before a Senate committee concerning the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act¹¹¹ and said that although violent crime has decreased nationwide over the past ten years, it still devastates the lives of many women. According to her testimony, in 2003 there were still a half million victims of domestic violence and almost 200,000 rapes and sexual assaults that were reported to the National Crime Victimization Survey. She reported that over one million women are stalked each year and one third of female homicide victims are murdered by their intimate partner.

We may think that violent rape is rare but the numbers indicate otherwise.¹¹² Rape is a crime committed increasingly against youth. Eighteen percent of women surveyed said they experienced a completed or attempted rape at some time in their life and 0.3 percent said they experienced a completed or attempted rape in the previous twelve months. Of the women who reported being raped at some time in their lives, 22 percent were under twelve years old and 32 percent were twelve to seventeen years old when they were first

¹¹⁰U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Crime Data Brief, *Intimate Partner Violence 1993-2001 (February 2003)* by Callie Marie Rennison (U.S. Department of Justice, 2003), www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/ipv01.pdf (accessed May 26, 2004).

¹¹¹Statement from U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Violence Against Women, *The Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (July 2005)* by Diane M. Stuart, Director (U.S. Department of Justice, 2005), www.usdoj.gov/ovw/docs/testimony07192005.pdf (accessed June 6, 2006).

¹¹²I would have been extremely skeptical of these statistics if not for the fact that, in the mid 1980s, I became aware that within my small congregation, just under 20 percent had suffered abuse in their lifetime.

raped. Seventy-six percent of the women who were raped and/or physically assaulted since age eighteen were assaulted by a current or former husband, cohabiting partner, or date, compared with 18 percent of the men.¹¹³

Many find a linkage between such violence and the dual message constantly offered by a confused culture. Mary Pipher intimates that this present generation is more baffled about sexuality than ever before:¹¹⁴

We raise our daughters to value themselves as whole people and the media reduces them to bodies. We are taught by movies and television that sophisticated people are free and spontaneous, while we are being warned that casual sex can kill. We are trapped by double binds and impossible expectations.¹¹⁵

Often, a woman's first sexual experience is a template for later experience. Long after the physical trauma of assault, victims must contend with the deep emotional wounds.¹¹⁶

If male preachers hope to communicate more effectively to the women in their audiences then they must better understand the unique physiological and psychological make-up of the women in their audience along with their distinctive needs, characteristics, capacities and sorrows so that they can more effectively bring to bear God's truth to the challenges they face with a result of seeing positive change.

¹¹³U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings From the National Violence Against Women Survey (November 1998)* by Patricia Tjaden and Nancy Thoennes (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998), www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/172837.pdf (accessed May 13, 2006).

¹¹⁴Pipher cites a study of Rhode Island teenagers. When asked to respond to circumstances under which a man has the right to have sexual intercourse with a woman without her consent, 80 percent said he had the right to use force if the couple was married while 70 percent said it was justified if the couple planned to be married. More than half felt that force was justified if the woman had led the man on. Pipher, 206.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, 209.

Women's Epistemology

Another critical area that male preachers must come to understand more fully, if they are to communicate more effectively to the women in their audience, is the area of women's cognition. The question that must be explored is how do women come to know and understand things? How do they process knowledge? It is an important task since "our epistemologies shape the way we see the world and see ourselves living in the world . . ." and they are in turn ". . . shaped by our family backgrounds and ongoing life experiences."¹¹⁷

Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule undertook a study in the 1980s to observe how women come to know things.¹¹⁸ Although the study was highly selective, being comprised of women (135 in all) who came from either an educational setting (recent graduates or current students) or ones involved in the "invisible college" (women involved with family agencies that deal with clients seeking information about or assistance with parenting) their findings may help in understanding how many women come to know things.¹¹⁹

Through their extensive interviews, the authors describe five different perspectives from which women view reality and draw conclusions about truth, knowledge, and authority. They believe the study demonstrates how a woman's self concepts and ways

¹¹⁷Mathews, 65.

¹¹⁸Their work will be referred to extensively in the following discussion, since it is considered by many in the field to be a landmark study and is cited extensively in a number of other works dealing with women's epistemology.

¹¹⁹They discuss the background of the study at the beginning of their collaborative book. Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger and Jill Mattuck Tarule, *Women's Ways of Knowing* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), xix.

of knowing are intertwined,¹²⁰ while at the same time acknowledging that the categories should not be considered fixed or exhaustive, as that they do not fully reflect the unique and complex thought processes of each individual woman. Their study mirrored in some ways that of William Perry whose influential studies¹²¹ with male Harvard undergraduates seemed to reveal a sequence of developmental growth through four distinct stages.¹²² The Belenky study showed that women's developmental growth may occur in a slightly different way.

They first identified those women who live in silence. The number of women occupying this category was the smallest of the five. They literally see themselves as mindless and voiceless,¹²³ not having the capacity to know anything on their own. The backgrounds of the women interviewed for this study have a number of things in common. Each of them grew up in relative isolation with few, if any friends. Their families were separated from a larger community, and violence was routinely used in place of words by at least one parent to influence behavior. These women feel passive and dependent and see authority figures as being all-powerful; blindly obeying them as the only way to keep out of trouble and insure survival. There is a complete lack of being

¹²⁰Belenky, 3.

¹²¹At least one author called his work “. . . the most influential book of the past twenty years on how college students respond to their college education.” Phillip C. Wankat and Frank S. Oreovicz, *Teaching Engineering* (McGraw Hill College, Purdue University, 1992) 269.

¹²²A side-by-side chart of Perry's and Belenky's stages of development can be seen in Mathew's book, 67.

¹²³The group describes “voice” as much more than merely a person's point of view but can be used as a metaphor that applies to many aspects of a women's experience and development having to do with sense of mind, self-worth and feelings as well as intellectual and ethical development. Belenky, 18.

able to think situations through on their own or the curiosity to even do so.¹²⁴ These women feel powerless and totally dependent on others for survival though that may not even be the case. They are passive, subdued and subordinate. They have no confidence that they can learn from the words of others.

They fall back on extreme sex-role stereotypes believing that men are active and able to get things done while women are passive and incompetent.¹²⁵ Their world is one of polarities. Things are either big or little, win or lose, good or bad. They ultimately see themselves as fighting a losing battle, so surviving is paramount. When asked to describe themselves, they are at a loss.¹²⁶

Second, the authors identified a group of women characterized by received knowledge (referred to as received knowers). Unlike those ensconced in silence, the received knowers believe that they can hear and understand things. They know that they can remember things taught to them. They see themselves as learners but have little confidence in their own ability to speak. Unlike those in silence, they see words as central to the knowing process; it is how they learn. But, like those in silence they are highly dualistic in her thinking with things being either right or wrong, black or white, true or false, good or bad. There is little or no room for, or patience with, ambiguity. If a thing seems only partially correct, the whole thing tends to be looked at as worthless.

¹²⁴One young pregnant teen when asked why she did not consider abortion, replied that her mother did not approve of abortion. When asked why that was so, she said it was because her grandmother didn't approve of it. When asked why her grandmother didn't approve of it, her response was, ". . . I really don't know. She just said she doesn't believe in them." The authors said that for these women "to hear is to obey. The actions of these women are in the form of unquestioned submission to the immediate commands of authorities, not to the directives of their own inner voices." Ibid., 28.

¹²⁵Belenky, 29.

¹²⁶The authors write "There were no words that suggest an awareness of mental acts, consciousness, or introspection." Ibid., 25.

Because of this mindset, it is difficult to accept the concept of “becoming” – as in growth and development. When asked how they see themselves changing over the years, they tended to define change in terms of how their occupational roles would change.

They believe that truth comes from the voice of others and accept it at the expense of their own voice. They are relieved when others say the same things they would say, and find comfort in having much in common with them. They seem unaware that often they alter their own thoughts so as to align with others. In time, it may be those very relationships and friendships which eventually help them disentangle their voice from the voice of others.¹²⁷

Received knowers rely heavily on authority figures as sources for truth; even for truth (knowledge) about themselves. They do not believe that they can generate facts and ideas from their own experiences.¹²⁸ They have faith that their own authorities have received words of truth from an even higher authority.¹²⁹ When required to do original work, received knowers are often confused and feel lost. Yet, praise from those same authorities for their intelligence could alter received knowers entire perception of themselves.¹³⁰

They value predictability and clarity. They do not like to grapple with something to try to understand it. Facts are true; opinions do not count. They are comfortable when they know exactly what is expected of them. Instead of grabbing onto the language of

¹²⁷Ibid., 38.

¹²⁸Said one woman in an interview, “I have to rely on the experts . . . Whenever I need to know about something, I have to go to someone who knows.” Ibid., 39.

¹²⁹“They assume that all authorities are infinitely capable of receiving and retaining ‘the right answer’ with impeccable precision.” Ibid., 40.

¹³⁰The authors observed that authorities in these women’s lives held considerable leverage and were often in particularly strategic positions to help these women. Ibid., 49.

those in silence (“I want; I feel; they made me; I had to”) they see more as “I should” or “I ought” when trying to grasp moral ideas. They devote themselves to others while striving to remain “selfless.” Often they worry that self-development would be at the expense of others.¹³¹ They strive mightily to live up to the images that they feel others have held up for them. “Feeling capable of hearing, understanding, and remembering, women at the position of received knowledge have faith that if they listen carefully enough they will be able to do the “right thing” and get along with others.”¹³²

The third epistemological category in the Belenky study describes those who are called subjective knowers. Unlike those in silence and received knowers, these women reject outside authority. They listen only to their inner voice.¹³³ Subjective knowers believe that there are right answers; they just believe that those right answers can be found only within. Said the authors, “. . . the fountain of truth . . . has shifted locale.”¹³⁴ The authors believe that this shift, where a woman becomes her own authority (and redefines the nature of authority), is a significant turning point in the lives of many women who have been silent or received knowers.¹³⁵ The authors found that many women in their interviews, who had “discovered” subjective truth, said it was the most

¹³¹Often received knowers will not seek to advance themselves unless they are convinced that it will help others. “They strive to subordinate their own actions to the symbolic representation of the good that they are able to hear in the voices of others.” Ibid., 46.

¹³²Ibid., 45

¹³³Hislop, 73.

¹³⁴Belenky, 54.

¹³⁵Almost half of those participating in the study were determined to fit into this category. Most came from backgrounds and families that were less advantaged, less stable, and less supportive than the other half.

liberating event in their lives.¹³⁶ Psychologists have noted that this shift in orientation from external to internal authority is a major task of adolescence, though in their studies they found that this shift was not confined to any specific age group.

Often, the shift came by way of a defining event. More often than not, that event was traumatic. In an inordinate number of cases for these women, the catalyst was finding out that a male authority figure had failed miserably, leaving them with a sense of outrage and betrayal. In a high number of cases, these women's loss of trust was due to sexual harassment and abuse at the hands of a close male authority figure which left their thinking in a kind of "cognitive cloudiness." Says Alice Mathews, ". . . Their sense of outrage and deception was so strong that, in response, they rejected all external authorities in their lives."¹³⁷ What happens to these women who had put their trust in an authority figure only to find out later that that trust was badly misplaced? Many conclude that ". . . nothing they had been taught was trustworthy."¹³⁸

When first transitioning into subjectivism,¹³⁹ women often trust only those who have been grounded in experiences like their own, turning away from those authority figures who are of higher status and power. Often, these people are mothers and grandmothers and female peers. But, once the shift to reliance on self begins, the authors state that women forge full-steam into a position of subjectivism where truth is an intuitive reaction

¹³⁶Many of the women interviewed could pinpoint a time when a defining moment occurred and they were transformed from a ". . . passive, silent victim to the assertive woman who had discovered her 'infallible gut.'" Belenky, 56.

¹³⁷Mathews, 72.

¹³⁸Mathews, 71.

¹³⁹In conversation, Alice Mathews pointed out to the author that the Belenky study showed that not all women shift into subjective knowledge. It found that many women could transition from received knowing to procedural knowing without positioning themselves as subjective knowers first.

(something experienced), and they become conduits through which truth emerges.¹⁴⁰

Truth is now a private matter that should not be imposed on others. They will listen to what their gut tells them. When intuition is lacking, and there is a dearth of personal experience, they will often take a “cafeteria approach” to truth: Sampling it all until one feels right.

When truth claims converge these women will always fall back on what works best for them. Referring often to personal experiences, they distrust logic, analysis, abstraction and even language, since all are viewed as male methods to truth (and in fact the level of rejection was often tied to its connection with a specific teacher, or doctor, or male acquaintance¹⁴¹ from their past). They even distrust books in favor of learning through “direct sensory experience.” Said one woman, “If I read something and if it agrees with my senses, then I believe it.”¹⁴²

Over half of the group that the researchers considered subjectivists had, in recent days of their interviews, taken steps to end relationships, reject obligations and move out on their own. “They seemed to be saying to us that if firsthand experience was the route to knowing, then they were going to amass experiences.”¹⁴³ Many spoke of a new-found power in their intuition and seemed to have, in the estimation of the authors, an almost obsessive preoccupation with acting on behalf of self over others; a chance to escape with

¹⁴⁰“For women at positions of silence and received knowledge, there is absolute truth that is true for everyone; at the position of subjective knowing, truth is absolute only for the individual.” Belenky, 69.

¹⁴¹The authors determined that most of the women in this group were antagonistic towards and had little time for men.

¹⁴²Ibid., 75.

¹⁴³Ibid., 76.

little thought of consequences for the future. Many thrived on defining themselves in opposite terms to what others thought of them. Heterosexual relationships and intimacy were on hold though they still were invested in connections with children, supportive friends, and other groups. Though some seemed to plumb the depths of despair, most were openly optimistic with their sense of new-found strength and self-value.¹⁴⁴

The fourth epistemological category describes those characterized as procedural knowers. The procedural voice is the voice of reason. Mathews believes it to be a “. . . distinctly modern way of knowing.”¹⁴⁵ It is a voice that often has proceeded from a mixture of received and subjective knowledge. Women who rely on procedural knowledge think systematically. Where once they may have embraced a voice that was intuitive, personal, essentially incommunicable and which considered personal opinion as the only true source of authoritative knowledge (and hence believed that all opinions were of equal value), they now see intuition as possibly deceptive, and gut reactions as irresponsible. They now believe that truth can be shared and expertise respected. It is a voice that enters into a systematic and deliberate analysis obtained by careful observation and conversation.

The procedural voice is a humbler voice which readily admits that people think differently, and there may be more than one “right” answer. It is a voice that has developed out of reaction and necessity from challenges to their old ways of thinking that were void of procedure in determining truth. It can be a very uncomfortable journey,

¹⁴⁴The authors observed that the majority had little patience for those who brought other viewpoints than their own. Most were enthralled with the subject of their new-found study: themselves. Through writing in their diaries and talking to themselves they all said that they were watching and listening to their inner voice. They were in the author’s words, “. . . ‘gaining a voice’ . . .” Ibid., 86.

¹⁴⁵She believes it is modern-based because it is experienced most often by women who have had the chance to go to school and are taught processes or procedures for analysis. Mathews, 86.

since many of these women have struggled to be released from what they considered dictatorial authorities and now feel that to succeed they once again need to conform to another's way of thinking. A college student may feel as if she must commit "academic prostitution" to comply. But, this very pressure to "conform" to the academic game is often part of the natural journey which ultimately will nudge her toward a more balanced voice. At times, the new mode of thinking concerning knowledge and truth does not proceed from a need to conform to the demands of external authorities but from a "... need to understand the opinions of other people, opinions that seemed at first obscure, alien, even threatening to her."¹⁴⁶

Procedural knowers can either follow a pattern that is described as separateness (impersonal)¹⁴⁷ or connectedness (relational).¹⁴⁸ For all these women, form predominates over content. The objective rules over the subjective. Some may come to value, even worship form and method (even to the point of it hindering new discoveries). Many of

¹⁴⁶Belenky, 101.

¹⁴⁷The first mode of thinking labeled separate knowing often doubts truth claims presented. Separate knowers are "... like doormen at exclusive clubs." They don't want to let anything in unless they are pretty sure it is good. These women assume everyone including themselves, may be wrong. They arrive at conclusions based on detached, impersonal reason. They experience relationships in terms of reciprocity. They coolly determine the rules and then follow them. They engage in the skill of debate. This response is most closely aligned with Perry's third category (pattern of thinking) of the male sequence of growth. "Separate knowers refuse to play the conventional female role, choosing instead to play a game that has belonged traditionally to boys – the game of impersonal reason." The majority of women who leaned heavily toward separate procedural knowledge in the Belenky study had attended or had recently graduated from elite, liberal arts colleges having a history of conforming to set expectations in the past but who were non-conventional in their femininity. Many reported that as children they were tomboys. Ibid., 103-112.

¹⁴⁸The connected procedural knower builds on the subjectivist's conviction that knowledge comes from personal experience rather than the teaching of some authority figure and is oriented toward relationship. These women learn and gain access to other people's knowledge through hard listening, empathy and taking impersonal stances on information. Connected knowing is typically more of a female response. Though coming to personal conclusions on actions of others, these women take a naturally nonjudgmental stance. One student said that "... 'she could not imagine a situation in which I would feel morally above or separate from someone else to the extent that I wouldn't make an attempt to understand.'" Connected procedural knowers start with a premise of connection, becoming attached to the objects they seek to understand. The separate self espoused a morality based upon impersonal procedures for establishing justice while the connected self established a morality based on care. Ibid., 112-122.

these women who are skillful at executing procedure experience an increased sense of control over their environment. One stated, “I don’t have to think that somebody out there has to figure things out for me anymore, because if I want to, I can.”¹⁴⁹ It is knowledge conceived as process. Procedural knowers are pragmatic and practical problems-solvers.

The final epistemological category describes those women who listen to what the authors call “. . . ‘a voice of integration’ . . .”¹⁵⁰ They are women who, as Mathews puts it, “. . . yearn for a personal way of knowing that goes beyond the systems they have been taught or relationships and institutions in which they have worked.”¹⁵¹ It is a way of knowing that integrates emotion and mind.¹⁵² It is the epistemological position of constructed knowledge. It is a voice of three parts: Reason, intuition and the expertise of others. The authors believe that for women to learn to speak in a unique and authentic voice, they must “jump outside” the framing that systems and authorities alone supply and create their own frame. The constructed knower borrows from different ways of knowing, weaving together an altogether new way of knowing.¹⁵³

Constructionists are about the task of evaluating their own assumptions about knowledge. While they appreciate experts, and will hear them, anyone who does not recognize and appreciate the complexities of situations will not be given much of a

¹⁴⁹Ibid., 96.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., 133.

¹⁵¹Mathews, 87.

¹⁵²Hislop, 73.

¹⁵³Mathews, 88.

hearing. “They appreciate expertise but back away from calling anyone an expert.”¹⁵⁴

Constructionists have a high tolerance for internal contradiction and ambiguity, learning to “. . . ‘live with conflict rather than talking or acting it away.’”¹⁵⁵ Unlike many men they see, they have no desire to compartmentalize home, work, thought and feeling but seek to integrate all aspects of their lives with all their complexities. This woman is a whole person.¹⁵⁶

When women in this category were queried about a proper response when moral choice is needed, the overwhelming response was that it depended on the situation. They tend more than any other group “. . . to understand conflict in the context of each person’s perspective, needs, and goals . . .” and then do the very best they can for all involved.¹⁵⁷ This group more than any other, is concerned with the moral and spiritual dimension of their lives.¹⁵⁸ They make personal choices in light of their effect upon others. They want to contribute in a constructive way to the “. . . burning issues of the day.”¹⁵⁹ They see life as a whole, not as a single choice. They are sensitive to both situation and context when it comes to moral choices. They see the moral response as the caring response. They seek to put their moral choices into tangible action out of conviction and out of a sense to

¹⁵⁴Ibid.

¹⁵⁵Belenky, 137.

¹⁵⁶Hislop, 73.

¹⁵⁷Mathews, 88.

¹⁵⁸Belenky, 150.

¹⁵⁹Ibid., 152.

the larger community which they believe often calls for compromise and a softening of ideals that they find unworkable.¹⁶⁰

Since procedural knowers maintain a measure of trust in authority figures, the authors believe that the presence of skilled, benign teachers takes on a critical role in the development of a voice of reason. Unlike others in their past, these women will respond to a knowledgeable counselor or teacher who, rather than telling them what to think, instead offer techniques for constructing answers. They will respond to teachers who judge not on opinion, but in terms of procedures used to substantiate opinion. Most of the women surveyed from this group described actions that authorities had taken that were critical in promoting their own powers of reasoning. In fact, the authors state plainly that the “. . . development of the technical know-how, the procedural knowledge that emerges at their position, requires formal instruction or at least the presence of knowledgeable people who can serve as informal tutors.”¹⁶¹

Summary

Many male preachers do not adequately understand the unique physiological, psychological and cognitive aspects of the women they regularly minister to. Because of that they may not be as effectively relating the sermon to the women who comprise a large segment of their audience as they think they are. Male preachers must understand that though men and women are the same in many important ways there are also important differences. The male preacher who desires to more effectively impact the

¹⁶⁰Said Belenky, “We observed a passion for knowing the self in the subjectivists and an excitement over the power of reason among the procedural knowers, but we found that the opening of the mind and the heart to embrace the world was characteristic only of the women at the position of constructed knowledge.” Belenky, 141.

¹⁶¹Ibid., 93.

women in his audience through the preparation and delivery of helpful sermons must be aware of the physiological, psychological and epistemological differences between men and women and how those differences impact their female listeners.

The preacher must first ask himself why it is at all important that the preacher distinguish sex differences from a scientific, physiological point of view. Is it simply, as one author put it, that it provides “. . . a fruitful method of understanding how different cognitive patterns arise” being “. . . one important way of learning more about ourselves as human beings?”¹⁶² While an undeniable benefit of gender research is increased understanding of cognitive patterns and propensities which helps in self understanding, this type of research can be of help at a more foundational level for the Christian communicator.

It appears that a woman's brain from birth (as influenced by hormones) is more sensitive to the social and emotional content of language and sights resulting in a heightened empathy and responsiveness to the life situations of people. It also appears that a woman is wired to more easily integrate thoughts, feelings, intangible cues, and character traits from those around her. If true, then a passionate, energetic, messenger of God's Word (whom she has determined to be sincere in his beliefs and authentic in his presentation) may be used of God in enormously beneficial ways to persuade thought and initiate positive action. A knowledge of these general differences in thought processing may also be of help in determining the most effective method of exposition and presentation. The more empathetic the listener the more they can be expected to easily enter into the distress, victory, joy or sorrow of a passage as doctrine is fleshed out in real

¹⁶²Kimura, 183.

life terms. Physiological differences may be a factor in determining the most effective messenger and method of disseminating the message.

Psychologically, women have an interpersonal orientation that is unique from men. Life situations, such as child bearing and early care, may join with natural inclinations to form key facets of a woman's personal identity rooted in relationship and intimacy. They are often led by an ethic of care and connectedness rather than law and logic. With rising incidences of sexual abuse and violence, increasing societal pressure to conform to impossible expectations of beauty and achievement, hormonal changes, and perceived failure in care and connection, a disturbing percentage of women now battle with psychological disorders such as major depression. A rising number of these women are now seeking help through counseling services.

The preacher would do well to remember that on any given Sunday morning he is dealing with a host of broken vessels who may doubt their worth, struggle with cultural expectations (which may be at odds with their inner promptings), and have been devastated by violence along with accompanying guilt and depression. The preacher must encourage women to understand their psychological make up and to pursue an ethic of responsibility. The preacher must also champion truth over the guilt-inducing accusations of their soul's enemy (reminding them that they are not ultimately responsible for others' actions but are chiefly responsible for themselves and their own conduct). Women need to be assured that someone hears them when they speak and understands. They need to be encouraged by examples of godly, whole women.

Given the psychological make-up of most women, the preacher needs to know that the most effective approach to the biblical text may not be through a male-centered view

of law and logic which often does not take into account its negative impact upon the emotional and relational aspects of his female listeners. The preacher needs to consider approaching scripture “. . . to address the moral issues of a text that takes both sides into account.”¹⁶³ He must encourage personal growth as a tool to strengthen the virtues of care and responsibility. A sincere, caring, passionate preacher who is cognizant of the vast differences in the ways that women come to know things of faith (which is at the core of the Christian life)¹⁶⁴ can have a huge, positive influence on all the women in his audience.

The preacher must strive to assure all women that they are not only competent and capable of learning but responsible before God to develop their gifts. He needs to understand that most women need to go beyond the first functional question in preaching (explanation) to proof (for analytical knowers) and application (for constructed knowers) that addresses real life pain and struggle with a humble acknowledgment of the complexities that life situations often bring in a sin-filled world. If they do, then the Sunday morning sermon can become a powerfully effective tool in bringing a unified vision of God as the “. . . trustworthy object of faith for salvation . . .”¹⁶⁵ and strength for daily living.

¹⁶³Mathews, 41.

¹⁶⁴Ibid., 104.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., 109.

CHAPTER 2 THEOLOGY

Several scriptures frame the discussion on the theological implications of this study.¹⁶⁶ In Matthew 22, the religious leaders of the day were trying to silence Jesus and destroy his credibility and Kingdom message through deception in order to gain a foothold to accuse him. Jesus, after silencing his persecutors and astonishing the crowd with his wisdom, was approached by a legal expert who picked up the attack with a question which must have seemed honest, straightforward and simple to those listening in. He asked, “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” It seemed that brushing up against this question in any fashion would bring disaster. Since all the law was sacred, singling out one was tantamount to throwing dirt at the others. But Jesus did not hesitate for even a moment. He looked at his inquisitor and said, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment.¹⁶⁷ The second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matthew 22:34-40).

¹⁶⁶Years ago, the author along with the elders of his church read Rick Warren’s book *The Purpose Driven Church*, and soon after led a number of the attendees through the entire New Testament in a Sunday School class seeking to discover what the purpose of the local church was. Three questions were repeatedly discussed throughout the study: *What are we to be as a church? What are we to do? And, finally, how do we do it?* The elder’s felt that if the members of the body collectively discovered what the local church was supposed to be and do, then that would lead to what the individual believer is to be and do as well. They discovered (as did Warren) that two passages from the words of Jesus summed up the overall purpose for his church and so for his people. They have come to be known as the Great Commandment and the Great Commission (Matthew 22:37-39; 28:19-20). The five-fold purpose of the West Essex Baptist Church is derived directly from these two passages. See Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House), 96-100.

¹⁶⁷The Westminster Shorter Catechism when defining the purpose of our lives, asks the question: “What is the chief end of man?” The answer: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.” The Westminster Standards, *The Shorter Catechism* (Horsham: Great Commission Publications, 1991), 71, question 1.

Just before his ascension to heaven after his death, burial and resurrection, Jesus took his disciples to a mountaintop and said to them, “. . . therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19, 20).

The person who loves his or her neighbor (Matthew 22:39), will do *ministry* by extending God’s love to them by meeting their needs and healing their hurts in the name of Jesus. The church has been commissioned by Christ to extend to the world his own ministry of compassion and prophetic protest against evil.¹⁶⁸

Jesus also said to “go and make disciples . . .” (Matthew 28:19).¹⁶⁹ Sharing the good news of forgiveness through the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the *mission* (responsibility) and the privilege of the West Essex Baptist Church and its individual members.¹⁷⁰ He said to “. . . go and make disciples . . . baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). He called them to *make public* a very private and personal decision to follow Jesus. Baptism was a symbol of their salvation and of their new fellowship, a fellowship of believers committed to the building up of the whole body through loving, caring and encouraging relationships.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸West Essex Baptist Church *Structure of Ministry* (Livingston, NJ: by West Essex Baptist Church, 2005), 12.

¹⁶⁹If one believes that the catechism correctly identifies an individual’s purpose on earth, then these two passages of scripture seem to be the roadmap to show exactly how to reach man’s chief end.

¹⁷⁰West Essex Baptist Church *Structure of Ministry*, 12.

¹⁷¹*Ibid.*, 13.

He also commissioned them to teach the new disciples to obey “. . . everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20). They were to endeavor to bring these fledgling converts to *maturity* through a process by which they would be transformed into the likeness of Christ in their thoughts, feelings and actions through strong biblical preaching, instruction and training.¹⁷² The people of God must be educated. The church has been commissioned as one of its primary goals to oversee the life-transformation of each of its members, until they are deeply committed to Christ and to each other, exercising their spiritual gifts for the building up of the whole body and the salvation of the lost.

It all leads to (and is issued forth from) *magnifying* God as people “Love the Lord . . . with all [their] heart . . .” (Matthew 22:37). People express their love to the exalted Lord through word and deed because He alone is worthy of their adoration and praise.¹⁷³ When God’s children express their love to him, whether through spoken word or act, they are worshipping. Acts of worship come naturally for those who are assured of God’s love and who in turn love him.

The purpose of the local church is to introduce people to Jesus Christ and have them make public their identification with his family. The church then develops them to Christ-like maturity and equips them for their ministry and life mission in his Church and the world, always with a view to magnifying God.

God has made provision so that all of his children may accomplish all that he has commanded. Down through this present age God has gifted the church with men and

¹⁷²Ibid.

¹⁷³Ibid., 12.

women to be “. . . apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-13). The charge given to those who lead from the pulpit and in other capacities in the church is to prepare the people so that they may be mature, able to be about works of service that will build God’s Church and his Kingdom, and so bring God glory.¹⁷⁴

Walter Liefeld points out that the Greek word for “prepare” in Ephesians 4:12 is “katartismos.” Though translated as a verb in the modern English text, it is actually a noun and refers to a “. . . situation in which a person or thing is in need either of completion or of restoration.”¹⁷⁵ Those “gifts” that God has given to the church have been charged with the chore of partnering with him to bring his church to a point at which the building (the church) will be completed.¹⁷⁶ The aim of those who lead must be the healthy growth of the believing community.¹⁷⁷ The preacher must be one who

¹⁷⁴Alice Mathews says that an effective preacher will have the wisdom to identify the gaps in people’s lives and then address those issues created by those gaps. The preacher will also have the patience to pace the rate of challenge as not to overwhelm and will have courage to keep attention focused on relevant issues without getting sidetracked. In this way, he will be able to lead them to maturity so that they can both take responsibility for their problems and seek solutions. The leader paints a picture of what good things God desires for his children. When women see that picture clearly, they can begin to love God with all their strength. Mathews, 127-142.

¹⁷⁵Walter Liefeld, *Ephesians IVP New Testament Commentary series*, vol. 10, ed. Grant Osborne (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1997), 107. This same idea of bringing someone or something that is lacking to maturity or completion is found in 2 Corinthians 7:1: “Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, *perfecting* holiness out of reverence for God.”

¹⁷⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1961), 86.

persuades his community of believers to embrace God's love which results in a life of praise, a desire to partner with him to bring about personal moral change, psychological healing, wholeness, and to use their gifts publicly and fervently for building the Kingdom. He must do so with *all* of the believing community.

Men and women are, on a whole, more alike than they are different. Yet it does remain a fact that because of real differences in nature and nurture, in ideas and feelings, in values and in the cultural lens from which they view life,¹⁷⁸ they may not hear the spoken Word in exactly the same way. It is the job of the preacher to help bridge the gap so that all of the believing community can participate in God's five-fold purposes for them; Praise (*Magnify*), Service (*Ministry*), Discipleship (*Maturity*), Evangelism (*Mission*), Fellowship (*Make Public*).¹⁷⁹

Praise (Magnify)

To love and worship God fully and to take their place as an integral part of his plan, women need to hear that they fully bear the image of the Creator, that he, in Christ, has forgiven their sins and covered their shame,¹⁸⁰ and that they can know and love him even as they are known and loved by him.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸Mathews, 20.

¹⁷⁹The purpose statement of the West Essex Baptist Church states "The purpose of the West Essex Baptist Church is to introduce people to Jesus Christ and *make public* identification with his family, develop them to Christ-like *maturity*, and equip them for their *ministry* and life *mission* in his church, and the world, in order to *magnify* God." West Essex Baptist Church Structure of Ministry, 12.

¹⁸⁰Staci Eldredge wrote, "Every woman I've ever met feels it - something deeper than just the sense of failing at what she does. An underlying, gut feeling of failing at who she *is*. *I am not enough* and *I am too much* at the same time. Not pretty enough, not thin enough, not kind enough, not gracious enough, not disciplined enough. But too emotional, too needy, too sensitive, too strong, too opinionated, too messy. The result is shame, the universal companion of women." John and Staci Eldredge, *Captivating* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., 2005), 6, 7.

¹⁸¹David wrote in Psalm 36:7, "How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings."

It was God who created human beings as male and female. Genesis 1:27 says that “So God created man in his own image¹⁸², in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” The image of God, as represented on earth, has nothing to do with his form¹⁸³ and everything to do with the fact that everyone, in some measure shares intellect, a moral nature, the capacity to communicate freely and an emotional element that transcends instinct.¹⁸⁴ None of the animals share this distinction with man.¹⁸⁵ In this capacity both men and women share equally in bearing the image of God.¹⁸⁶ They both are integral and necessary reflections of God’s complete picture of Himself.

To love and worship God fully, women need to hear often that they are pursued by a loving, forgiving, heavenly Father who desires relationship with them.¹⁸⁷ It is his chief

¹⁸²John Walton comments that the image of God is an important theological concept in both Testaments and in Near Eastern thought. The ancients believed that an image or idol in some way carried the essence of that which it represented. John H. Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 130. Gordon Wenham says that the divine image imprinted on man makes man “. . . God’s vice-regent on earth.” Gordon Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 32.

¹⁸³Gordon Wenham offers the possibility that the image of God in man speaks of a physical resemblance since that is by far the most frequent meaning of the word, but he counters that possibility with sufficient biblical and extra-biblical evidence to render the original assertion void. Wenham, 30.

¹⁸⁴William MacDonald, *Believers Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992), 33.

¹⁸⁵Henri Blocher wrote, “To be created in the image of God is the privilege of the human race and is shared by none of the animals mentioned in Genesis. The rest of Scripture does not seem to attribute it even to the angels, even though they are ‘greater in might and power’ (2 Peter 2:11) . . . this singular honor marks him out as God’s choice creature.” Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press 1984), 83.

¹⁸⁶Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1991), 95). Alan Johnson says, “Both male and female are in the image of God, as evidenced by their both having ruling functions over the creation (Genesis 1:28). Alan F. Johnson, *1 Corinthians* The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, vol. 7, ed. Grant Osbourne. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press 2004), 194.

¹⁸⁷A number of female authors allude to the fact that for many women, this is a very difficult concept. One of them, Lisa Bevere, wrote “I cannot even begin to tell you the number of women I have spoken with who are afraid of approaching God as a Father. For that matter, they fear anything with a semblance of

pursuit and it must be theirs. For some, the message of the gospel steeped in the fact of God's love for His creatures is inspirational, but it was *meant* to be transformational. Love is not a mere aspect of God's character, but who he is.¹⁸⁸ The expressions of God's love are manifested in His goodness, kindness, forgiveness and mercy. The biblical writers assumed the liberating aspect of the knowledge and experience of God's love and mankind's reciprocal response. Songwriters and poets, through all the history of the church, have extolled the virtues of the God who is love pursuing sinners to make them new. The Apostle Paul came to understand this part of God's essence better than most and wanted others to know it, experience it, and be transformed by it too.¹⁸⁹ When a woman knows and experiences true relationship with God in response to his love, she can magnify and worship as God desires and deserves. God calls people to worship him in response to a loving, mutual relationship with him. When a woman is convinced of her created importance and God's loving designs on her, she can, and will, worship as a response of thankfulness and praise for his goodness. She can then begin to minister effectively from the overflow of a full heart embracing the biblical mandate to loving all

being male because of what men in their past have done. Let these words bring comfort to you . . . God is not a man." Lisa Bevere, *Fight Like a Girl* (New York: Warner Faith, 2006), 52.

¹⁸⁸1 John 4:16 ". . . God is love . . ." It is an essential part of his very nature; a part of the fabric of his being.

¹⁸⁹Ephesians 3:17b-19, "And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." There is no place where a Christian can go, where they will be separated from the love of God (Romans 8:38, 39). That love is expounded upon in the first eleven chapters of Romans where the Apostle Paul explains God's grace in justifying sinners. When he reaches chapter twelve, he then discusses how people who have been afforded such loving grace should actively respond in their everyday life. Through our partnership we are ". . . being transformed into his likeness . . ." (2 Corinthians 3:18). Ezekiel 16 gives graphic imagery of God's sovereign and loving choice of Israel when he compares her to an infant thrown out and exposed to death but who he gathers up and raises to maturity. He eventually makes her his bride but she, inexplicably, even after all his kindness, ends up in the pursuit of idols. Yet he does not end the relationship. Verse 60 says, "Yet, I will remember the covenant I made with you in the days of your youth . . ."

in need. A preacher can help a woman understand both the glory of her creation and the passion God has for her.

Service (Ministry)

Women often define and evaluate themselves in terms of the health of their relationships and in their ability to care for those around them.¹⁹⁰ When they do not measure up in their minds, they may experience guilt, stress and even depression. Although a true measure of undeserved guilt may often be associated with this whole sense, it may be that this inner urge of care and service is a part of how God has made them.

In the first chapter of the book of Genesis, there is an account of God creating. He created light and the sky above. He formed the sea and the earth, the sun, moon and stars. He created all of the living creatures; fish to swim in the sea and birds that glide through the air and animals that roam over the land. After each thing, which he created out of nothing, God pronounced his work to be “good” (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). It was all good and pleasing to the eyes of the Creator.

In Genesis chapter two, near the end of the creation synopsis account, for the first time, we find something that does not please God; which he does not find good. God said, “. . . ‘It is not good for man to be alone’” (2:18). Everything else as far as the eye could see and beyond was good except for the situation that the man found himself in. He was alone. It was not good for the man to be alone, it would seem, since he was created in the image of the triune God whose unity amidst diversity would be reflected in

¹⁹⁰Mathews, 38.

an image-bearer that replicated, in some measure, this equal but different characteristic.¹⁹¹

So, God created “. . . a helper suitable for him” (2:18) to solve the problem of loneliness and to come along side of the man to partner with him and to be his companion forever.¹⁹² Gordon Wenham notes that the prepositional phrase “suitable for him” or “matching him” or most literally “like opposite him” (or “nāgad”) found only here in the Old Testament.¹⁹³ The word “helper” (or “ezer”)¹⁹⁴ “. . . alerts the reader to the importance of companionship for man.”¹⁹⁵ He needed a helper that matched him (2:18, 20).

When God linked Eve with Adam, he brought to the man someone who, like himself,¹⁹⁶ was created to bear the image of God. She, though like him in most important aspects, was different, complementing his physical, psychological and emotional

¹⁹¹Susan Hunt, *Biblical Womanhood in the Home*, ed. Nancy DeMoss (Wheaton: Crossway Books 2002), 151.

¹⁹²Companionship assumes a deep measure of closeness. It is being aligned with someone intimately in thoughts, goals, plans, and efforts (and in the case of marriage, in the physical realm).

¹⁹³Says Gordon Wenham, “It seems to express the notion of complementarity rather than identity. The help looked for is not just assistance in his daily work or in the procreation of children, though these aspects may be included, but the mutual support companionship provides.” Wenham, 68.

¹⁹⁴Wenham states, “Elsewhere ezer usually refers to divine assistance, but it is used in three prophetic passages of military aid (Isa. 30:5; Ezk. 12:14; Hos. 13:9). To help someone does not imply that the helper is stronger than the helped; simply that the latter’s strength is inadequate by itself” (e.g. Josh 1:14; 10:4, 6; I Chron. 12:17, 19, 21, 22). Wenham, 68. Mary Kassian comments that chapter one of Genesis focuses on the creation account from a slightly different angle than chapter two does. In chapter one we see “. . . the absolute, unequivocal equality of the sexes . . . the uniqueness and equality of human beings, while chapter two balances the equality with role distinctions.” Mary A. Kassian, *Women, Creation, and the Fall* (Westchester: Crossway Books, 1990), 15.

¹⁹⁵Wenham, 68.

¹⁹⁶Blocher says that the emphasis in the passage is on the similarity of the man and the woman, on their close kinship and on their possession of an identical essence. Blocher, 98.

makeup. She was an answer to the need of Adam.¹⁹⁷ She completed or filled out the man's life making him a larger person than he could have been alone bringing into his frame of reference a new feminine dimension from which to view life that he could not have known in any other way. He, in turn, brought to his wife a masculine perspective that enlarged her life, making her a fuller, more complete person than she could have been apart from him. The loneliness of mere masculinity or mere femininity is likewise met. She was his glory¹⁹⁸ (I Corinthians 11:7).

Eve was Adam's "ezer,"¹⁹⁹ someone who made up for all that he lacked. Although men and women collectively reflect God's glory,²⁰⁰ the woman in addition is crowned as this reflection of the man. Says one author, a ". . . woman has the power to reflect all the man would hope or aspire to be. A woman's presence often adds meaning and purpose to a man's life and labor."²⁰¹ Eve ministered to Adam in a way that no other living creature could. Women need to know that though they played a central role in the fall of humanity (Genesis 3:1-7), they are, by God's grace, also a central part of God's

¹⁹⁷Lisa Bevere poignantly stated, "Men and women have wrestled with each other for far too long, and the time for awakening is at hand. We are not enemies . . . we are beloved allies." Bevere, 27.

¹⁹⁸Alan Johnson in writing on the difficult "head covering" section of 1 Corinthians 11 says of verse 7 that "The woman is the 'glory' of the man is grounded in both her creation *from man* (v. 8) and her creation *for man* (not vice versa), that is, to be man's 'helper as his partner' (Genesis 2:18 NRSV), so that he might have a companion to overcome his loneliness." Johnson, 195.

¹⁹⁹Staci Eldredge tells women "*Ezer* is woven into the fabric of your feminine heart. You must live this out." Eldredge, 205.

²⁰⁰Psalms 8:4, 5 says, "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you are for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor."

²⁰¹Bever, 97.

redemptive solution to the destruction wrought by sin,²⁰² in soothing the pain that has enveloped male/female relationships since the Garden.

The pain associated with gender has led some to believe that if men and women could be blended together, it would perhaps minimize the differences that have long wounded their relations, and would bring about healing²⁰³ and a better society. Blend the strengths of the genders together in a grand androgynous being and gender would be rendered meaningless and harmless; or so the conventional thinking went. So men were often encouraged to be more vulnerable and defenseless (“get in touch with their feminine side”), and women were coached to harden themselves and to be more aggressive and masculine. But the mixing of black and white has often resulted in a dull gray. It does not clarify. Add to this the confusion wrought by some religious traditions which strip all sense of worth and self from women while encouraging them to find their identity in men and it must be acknowledged that there are real problems to overcome.

The Bible’s answer is not moving both sides to a center position from which everyone will lose their unique position of power and strength. There are some things that women can do that a man cannot and vice versa. There are some things that each is uniquely formed to excel at. But one thing seems certain: They were not meant to play

²⁰²Lisa Bevere states that women must learn to turn off the static of our culture which tells them that women are a problem. They are not a problem, they are an answer. Bevere, 22.

²⁰³The three “waves” of the feminist debates through the years have had different goals associated with them. Women associated with the first wave of feminists (1848-1920) simply wanted to gain a social voice in areas that directly impacted women. The second wave feminists (1960’s) viewed the accepted differences of women and men as a weakness, and the agenda was to show that women could do whatever men could if not constrained by gender stereotypes. Many of them began to dress, act and work in professions previously held by males. The third wave feminists (1970’s) began to see women’s differences as a source of pride leading to an agenda of female superiority. Many saw no need for a male presence. Beverly Hislop, *Shepherding a Woman’s Heart* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003), 65, 66. By and large the feminist agenda has brought about limited healing and understanding between men and women.

on different sides of the field but to occupy distinctive positions on the same team. “We were meant to do the dance of life together!”²⁰⁴

If this biblical truth is pressed, it can be of tremendous encouragement to many women whose personal experiences have contributed to an overall sense that their opinions, feelings and thoughts are of marginal importance. In their creation and make up, women are care-givers. They need to be encouraged in their God-given desires to minister and serve through the forging of relationship, the meeting of needs, and the healing of hurts in the name of Jesus. Women also need to be encouraged to teach others to do the same.

After surveying his creation in Genesis 1:31, “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” God blessed them together. “Together, there was no lack or weakness.”²⁰⁵ The man and the woman had everything they needed to initiate order so that the earth could flourish. Adam began this process and then God created Eve who enhanced the scene and brought her “gift of relationship.” She enhanced Adam’s connection.²⁰⁶ If it is true that women are more oriented to interdependence compared to masculine individualism,²⁰⁷ the two can push each other to a more balanced wholeness.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴Bevere, 28.

²⁰⁵Ibid., 122.

²⁰⁶Bevere wrote that “without Eve, Adam had seed but no garden in which to plant. His seed could not produce fruit. Without the woman, the man had an abundance of food but no one to enjoy it with There was no one he could dream with. Without Eve, Adam was self-contained, but Eve expanded his life on every front. From the very beginning, men were about placement and women were about relationship and atmosphere.” Ibid., 123.

²⁰⁷Mathews, 39.

²⁰⁸Sadly, we know that neither women nor men exhibit their unique orientation perfectly since both suffer the debilitating effects of their sin nature (Galatians 5:16), but those strengths and basic orientations were not obliterated by the fall.

A preacher who can encourage female listeners in the pivotal position God has entrusted to them in areas such as help and care-giving will help them to minister in ways that will bring Him glory and the church much good.

Discipleship (Maturity)

God wants women to be whole persons. His purpose in creating both men and women was so that they might bring him glory. They are the object of his love. Sin obscured God's glory in them but God, in his mercy, provided from the beginning²⁰⁹ a Savior by whom his creations may once again move towards wholeness. In Ephesians 1:4 Paul writes, "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight . . ." "Blameless" (or "ámomos"), coupled with the negative, means "without blemish; morally faultless, unblameable."²¹⁰ Paul is saying that God's desire since the Garden is to eliminate disfiguring spots or blemishes from his chosen ones.²¹¹ He has designed people to be the object of his love and to make them ". . . mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:4).

Maturity comes through obedience to God's Word (2 Timothy 2:15) but often ministers have been unwittingly guilty of preaching the biblical text in a way which emphasizes transformational, moral decision making based solely upon rules (right and

²⁰⁹God's word to the serpent in reference to the coming Savior was, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3:15).

²¹⁰BibleWorks for Windows, Version 4.0, (BibleWorks LLC, 1998).

²¹¹When Adam and Eve sinned they did so against the created order impairing their relationship to God and each other. Says Mary Kassian "Adam and the woman lost the fundamental sense of oneness they had before the Fall . . . Their unity had disintegrated. Kassian 23.

wrong personal action) apart from their debilitating effect on relationship²¹² (with God).

This can have a stunting effect upon the growth of women. While a proper moral path may seem cut-and-dried to a male preacher, often a woman may be agonizing upon how a decision will affect significant relationships in her life.²¹³ If she perceives that God's word demands of her the sacrifice (or destruction) of her most cherished relationships, she often will experience inner turmoil and may decide to make a wrong, unbiblical decision based upon her perception of the debilitating effect a right, biblically informed decision will have on relationship.

Clearly, relationship considerations in moral decision making are more important in women than they are in men. It is often here, when a woman is faced in her mind with

²¹²In Galatians 4:8, 9, Paul acknowledges relationship with God and sins effect upon it. The Galatians at one time "... did not know God, you were slaves ... But now you know God or rather are known by God - how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?" Tim Keller comments that Paul is saying, "How can you turn back to idols since you know God and, more importantly, you are known by God." Tim Keller, *Paul's Letter to the Galatians*, Lesson 8 (Leaders Guide: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2002).

²¹³Carol Gilligan sheds light on the conflict in her report of the now famous Kohlberg study (rights and responsibilities study) of Heinz, a man faced with the decision of whether to steal a drug which he cannot afford to purchase in order to save the life of his wife. Two eleven-year old children who participated in the study, one male the other female, came to two very different conclusions to this moral problem. When asked the question, "Should Heinz steal the drug?" the male from the beginning clearly states that Heinz should steal it. Faced, as was constructed for them, a conflict between property and life, the male came to the logical priority of life over property. He considered the dilemma a "... math problem with humans." The rights of the husband in trying to save his wife outweighed the druggist's right to charge whatever he would like for the needed drug. The female when faced with the same dilemma gives an answer that appeared "evasive and unsure." She saw a need for another solution believing that Heinz should not steal the drug, while at the same time believing that he should not let his wife die. She did not rely on law and logic but the effect the theft could have on the relationship. She thought, "If he stole the drug, he might save his wife then, but if he did, he might have to go to jail, and then his wife might get sicker again ... they should really just talk it out and find some other way to make money." She did not see the dilemma as a "math problem," (a problem in moral logic). Instead, she saw the dilemma in the context of relationships that would be hurt, and as a failure on the part of the druggist to respond in a proper fashion to need. She sees a world comprised of relationships and connectedness rather than people standing alone adhering to a system of rules. She responded to the dilemma with an ethic of care and connectedness rather than with a judgment based on logic and law. Gilligan, 25-38.

making decisions that could injure relationship, that the greatest inner conflict arises.²¹⁴ Much of the preaching done today in pulpits, which centers on rules and principles over relationship, may corner women into believing that they do not have the luxury of including care for others in their moral decision making. To many women, the way males arrive at moral decision making shows a crass indifference to human need while men may look at the female response, which seems to take the uniqueness of each situation into consideration, as hopelessly confused.²¹⁵

God *does* clearly call men and women alike to obedience no matter what the surface and inner consequences may look and feel like. Jesus said in Luke 14:26, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters - yes, even his own life - he cannot be my disciple." The preacher must persuade women that God's love and desire for relationship is as great for those whom she cherishes as it is for her. He must also clearly communicate God's overall control in every situation,²¹⁶ and press the notion to his female listeners that disobedience to clear biblical mandates hurt a relationship that trumps all others: their relationship with God himself.²¹⁷

²¹⁴Says Mathews, "Some may choose to view morality primarily in terms of justice or fairness; others may choose to view morality in terms of care. That choice (between justice and care) changes the way we define a moral problem. The problem is different because the 'picture' is different." Mathews, 36.

²¹⁵Ibid., 36-39.

²¹⁶Abraham acknowledged God as a righteous judge in Genesis 18:25 while David mused about his complete and utter knowledge and care in Psalm 139.

²¹⁷The author has observed that often the idols that most women bow to are relational in nature. People today are no different from God's ancient people in their propensity to follow after those things in which they find salvation and security when they are no longer sure that God loves and accepts them in Christ alone and apart from achievements. The best antidote for idol worship, whether those idols are related to job, money, personal achievement or relationships, is a deep conviction of God's love for men and women.

The triune God, in whose image both men and women are made, is a God of relationship.²¹⁸ One of the consequences of sin is the fact that it tarnishes people's fellowship with him. Although the Christian's standing in Christ is sure,²¹⁹ their poor decisions (sin) do affect their fellowship with God.²²⁰ Women need to see clearly the connection that obedience to God has upon their ongoing relationship with him. The preacher needs to know that women will respond more favorably to calls to obedience and to maturity in the Christian walk when the message is framed in the context of relationship with God who loves them.

The preacher must be aware of the fact that women will develop spiritually if he is actively providing an environment by which they may move along the continuum of coming to know God who is faithful to his children.²²¹ Hebrews 11:6 says, "And without faith it is impossible to please God. . . ." God is pleased when folks place their faith in

²¹⁸Says Barbara Hughes, "When God speaks of himself in the plural (Gen 1:26) we learn that though God is One, he is not alone. Whatever else it may mean to be made in God's image, this verse makes it clear that we are made for relationship." Barbara Hughes, *Biblical Womanhood in the Home*, ed. Nancy Leigh DeMoss (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2002), 120.

²¹⁹Tim Keller said in connection with Galatians 4:8, 9 that it is not so much our regard and love for God that makes us a Christian but rather God's love and regard for us. ". . . he has set his love on us in Jesus. Now our knowing of God will rise and fall depending on many things. But God's knowing of us is absolutely fixed and solid." Keller, Lesson 8.

²²⁰Revelation 3:20 says "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." The invitation is in the context of sinning believers.

²²¹Alice Mathews offers advice on how best to enact spiritual formation in those categorized in the five basic epistemologies of women. The best chance to move forward in their understanding of God for those women living in silence will be if they can see the gospel lived out by women they trust who themselves trust in God. Those categorized as received knowers, since they do not believe that they can generate knowledge through personal reflection on their own experiences, need to hear preaching from a spiritual guide who will show them that they are capable and gifted by God. The subjective knower who mistrusts authority figures must learn truth from other women who are most like themselves. Hearing narrative biblical literature, especially of women's experiences, may help them. Procedural knowers who rely on logic, analysis, and evaluation (methodology) need to hear a vision of God who is adequate for all of life's circumstances. Christ is formed in the constructed knower when they are given a broad vision of a trustworthy God that encompasses life's complexities. Mathews, 93-113.

him to not only save them from eternal judgment but when they trust him to be adequate for every situation in this life. In Habakkuk 2:4, God gives a description of how the righteous will live; it is by faith.²²² “Emuwnah” speaks of “firmness, fidelity, steadfastness, steadiness.”²²³ For the women who listen in the midst of life’s struggles clinging to faith, the best thing a preacher can do is to help direct that faith to the Faithful One.²²⁴ As women cling more faithfully to him in all situations, they will grow in God’s grace and mature in their relationship with him.

Evangelism (Mission)

Jesus’ call to evangelism was extended to all, both men and women who themselves had experienced salvation (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8). Women are called to plant the seed of the word²²⁵ in others and give testimony of the hope that is within them. The imperative to “make disciples” (Matthew 28:19) was given to *all* the disciples present on that mountaintop that day.

²²²With regards to the word “faith,” Kleinert said that it not only speaks of the pardoning grace of God which brings salvation but it speaks of “. . . laying hold upon and standing firmly upon the word and promise of God, the firm reliance of the soul upon the invisible, which cannot be depressed and misled by the antagonism of that which is seen.” Paul Kleinert, *The Book of Habakkuk* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House 1960), 23.

²²³BibleWorks for Windows, Version 4.0, (BibleWorks, LLC, 1998).

²²⁴In a teaching on the weak but willing faith of the hemorrhaging woman in Mark 5, Alice Mathews said, “Jesus asks only that we believe that he has the power to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. It’s the only way we can be in relationship to him. Our faith may be imperfect. It may be weak. But when we come with whatever faith we have, He reaches out to us with healing.” Women of all epistemologies will benefit as we direct them to Jesus who in the midst of our struggle will hear and is able to make a difference in their lives. Alice Mathews, *A Woman God Can Teach* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 1991), 88.

²²⁵James alludes to farming (James 1:21); something that everyone in his reading audience would at least have a basic working knowledge about. The truth of God’s Word is often looked at as seed in the Bible (Mathew 13:4; 1 Corinthians 3:6; 9:11). Jesus told the parable of the sower and the seed. He said that the seed was the Word of God which is planted in the hearts of men and women.

The message of redemption announced in the Garden, pictured in Old Testament sacrifices and revealed through the Lamb of God²²⁶ includes both horror and joy. From the initial bloody provision to cover the shame of mankind's first parents (Genesis 3:21), to the slaying of innocent animals (Leviticus 9:7), to the death of his anointed (Romans 3:25), God testified to the seriousness of sin (Romans 6:23). The just concept of payment for sin (Isaiah 65:7; Romans 5:8; Colossians 2:13, 14) is an important theological presupposition in making new disciples of Jesus Christ. The cross preceded resurrection Sunday.

The Bible refers to itself as a mirror to the souls of men and women (James 1:23). A mirror is designed to show someone in detail what they look like. It, above everything else, reveals to them an accurate picture of what they are. Even if they were blissfully unaware of what the real picture looked like before, once seeing themselves clearly, they can then make the needed corrections. It is not always a comfortable revelation.²²⁷ "I must understand that the Bible is not only my source of comfort, but my source of bruising."²²⁸ The Lord said through Jeremiah, "'Is not my word like fire,' declares the LORD, 'and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?'" (Jeremiah 23:29).

People are in need of the objective (sometimes hard) reality of the mirror of God's Word to give them truth. Using the sometimes harsh, painful imagery of a surgeon's knife, the writer of Hebrews says, "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and

²²⁶"... Look the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

²²⁷Most people want mirrors that will make them look good and feel good. That is why Paul warned Timothy that the day is coming when people "... will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear." (2 Tim. 4:3).

²²⁸W. Glyn Evans, *Daily with the King* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979), September 22 devotional.

marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).²²⁹ The Bible tells its readers exactly what they are about. That is what it was designed to do. The fact is judgment is in store (Psalm 1:5; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Peter 3:7) for all who have never trusted their sin-bearer.²³⁰

Most people view themselves in a generally positive light when it comes to eternal matters, but the Bible seems to indicate that much of their optimism is misplaced.²³¹ Jeremiah speaks of the false prophets of his day when he says, "From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit. They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:13, 14).

Yet coupled with those difficult words are ones of love and mercy. Luke 15 has been called the “lost and found department of the Bible.”²³² It, as well as any part of scripture, introduces the importance of lost sinners to Jesus; and so for his disciples.²³³ It

²²⁹Some conservative scholars see this reference to the Word of God as to the living Word (John 1), Jesus Christ, not the written Word, the Bible.

²³⁰1 Peter 2:24, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.” One sure way that a person can know if they are in the presence of a false prophet is if this concept is missing from the message. If words of sweetness, light, peace, tranquility, and security are all that is preached then the listener is in danger of losing their soul. “This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD,’” (Jeremiah 23:16). Most of the dozens of references to false prophets in the Old Testament have to do with their leading God’s people astray with words of peace and comfort.

²³¹Romans 3:10 gives a general description of lost mankind. “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless.”

²³²Haddon Robinson referred to it as such in a sermon on the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son from Luke 15.

²³³Darryl Bock, *Luke*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, ed. Grant R. Osbourne, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press 1994), 256.

is a message of mercy that resonates naturally and deeply with many women.²³⁴ As the Pharisees and teachers of the law grumbled about the fact that Jesus welcomed sinners, and even ate with them, Jesus told a single parable with three acts. The main character in all three stories had lost something of value which he or she takes great pains to recover. While that thing is lost there is an unannounced tension and fear, but when that thing which was lost is found; when there is restoration where once there was alienation, there is great rejoicing and relief (15:6, 9, 23). The mercy of God is ever reaching out to lost sinners.²³⁵

A word of both justice and mercy is needed for individuals to recognize their sin, repent, and receive God's grace and mercy. Micah 6:8 says, "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." "Justice" ("mishpat") has to do with "deciding a case in court" or "presenting cause for judgment."²³⁶ "Mercy" ("cheched") speaks of "goodness, godliness, kindness, pity, and faithfulness."²³⁷ Mercy shows compassion for the miserable. Its object is misery. By the atoning sacrifice of Christ, a way is open for the exercise of mercy towards the sons of men in harmony with the demands of truth and righteousness (Genesis 19:19; Ex 20:6, 34:6, 7; Ps 85:10, 86:15,16). In Christ, mercy²³⁸ and truth meet together.

²³⁴See Luke 7:36-50 and the story of the sinful woman who anointed Jesus' feet.

²³⁵"He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy," (Proverbs 28:13).

²³⁶BibleWorks for Windows, Version 4.0 (BibleWorks LLC, 1998).

²³⁷Ibid.

²³⁸Mercy is a Christian grace. See Matthew 5:7; 18:33-35.

As the Christian goes out to be used by God to seek and to save the lost in imitation of their master (Luke 19:10), they do so propelled by a heart of mercy and armed with the sad truth of the perilous condition of lost souls and the gospel offer of salvation through Christ. It is all done with a sense of profound humility based upon people's knowledge of their own poverty of spirit (Matthew 5:3). God requires both justice and mercy ". . . because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!" (James 2:13).

As God's people move forward to accomplish his *good* requirements (to persuade people to trust Christ), they must do so combining attention to the principle of God's truth within the context of human need and male and female focus.²³⁹ God calls upon the strengths of both men and women in announcing the good news of the Kingdom.²⁴⁰ The preacher needs to encourage women in personal evangelistic efforts to balance natural tendencies towards mercy with the truth of sin and its devastating, eternal consequences. The preacher needs to help women see the need to share a message of both mercy *and* justice.

Fellowship (Make Public)

In recent years there seems to be a growing number of believers who feel that belonging and being committed to a family of Christians in a local church is optional. It

²³⁹Alice Mathews writes "The coordinating conjunctions (*and*) in that sentence (Micah 6:8) make it clear that the question is not one of "acting justly" or "loving mercy." We should do both. This brings what is considered to be a masculine focus on the abstract principles and a feminine focus on the human context of their application into play. It is not enough to preach the principles without mercy or concern for those affected by those principles. Nor can we sacrifice the principles to individual situations. We are called to preach God's truth through the use of both principles and contexts. The interaction between the two is like a dance." Alice Mathews, *Preaching that Speaks*, 43.

²⁴⁰The author has, on a number of occasions, listened to preachers who have boldly and unhesitatingly announced judgment and hell for sinners while, at the same time, only incidentally mentioning God's merciful, broken, heart over the prospects of even one sinner being lost forever. He has *never* heard a woman share the gospel without a heavy emphasis on the latter.

is a pleasant but unnecessary add-on.²⁴¹ Others, though attending services, feel content to come and largely remain isolated from any form of true fellowship. The Church is not a building but a fellowship of true believers committed to the building up of the whole body through loving, caring and encouraging relationships.²⁴²

Fellowship implies more than passing commitment. It implies accountability among the believing community and responsibility, care and protection of each other. Christian fellowship calls on people to listen to an alternate voice to that of their culture, yet deep in the fallen heart of men and women echoes the cry of their ancient father who said “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Genesis 4:9). The answer for the counter-cultural people of God is “yes.” It always has been. It should be what distinguishes to others what the Christian community is all about. It is one of the indelible distinguishing marks of people who are part of the new culture. They recognize that the other members of this new culture have a claim on their time and their energies.

When people enter into Christian fellowship, they are changed. Spiritual growth and God’s blessing requires sustained personal effort and devotion to the body of believers. Acts 2:42, 43 says, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.”

²⁴¹John links Christian fellowship with fellowship of the Father and the Son (1 John 1:1-4). Donald Burdick says, “To place one’s faith in the incarnate Christ is to enter a fellowship which includes God the Father and God the Son as well as all those who possess saving faith.” Donald Burdick, *The Epistles of John* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1970), 21.

²⁴²The writer of Hebrews chastises his readers who obviously were neglecting fellowship. “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (1:24, 25). William Barclay notes that it is easy to stop meeting and drifting into “selfish Christianity” which is really a contradiction in terms. “We are Christians not only for our own sake but also for the sake of others.” William Barclay, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, The Daily Study Bible Series. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press 1976), 121.

One of the blessings that God gives to the church as they take his call to fellowship seriously is power. It is a commodity that the modern church is in desperate need of. The book of Acts seems to indicate that, when the people were together in fellowship, the Holy Spirit's power was unleashed among them. There was an undeniable connection. When the first disciples came together in intimate, prayerful fellowship, they saw the power of God come down.²⁴³ Where fellowship is lacking, there is no blessing of the Holy Spirit.

Power living, which comes (though not exclusively) through the fellowship of believers, is available to all. Christian women, every bit as men, desire to make a difference²⁴⁴ and to see the power of God on display in their lives. They desire to be part of a “. . . web of inclusion . . . ” instead of being led to feel as if they are at the “. . . bottom of the food chain.”²⁴⁵ Unfortunately, sometimes the church has defined fellowship for women in terms of a narrow sphere of service.²⁴⁶ While simple loving acts are vital,²⁴⁷ being committed to fellowship is more than simple service; it is entering into

²⁴³Luke writes “All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need” (Acts 2:44, 45). When people who are fellowshiping with God begin to fellowship with each other on a deep Christ-centered level, God empowers them to break free of natural, selfish tendencies to do that which once may have been unthinkable.

²⁴⁴Hilary Lips said that most people want to feel that they are having some sort of impact on their environment. She describes this as “. . . the power motive.” Hilary M. Lips, *Women, Men and Power* (Mountain View: Mayfield Publishing Company 1991), 54.

²⁴⁵Mathews, 131.

²⁴⁶“Its message to women has been primarily ‘you are here to serve. That’s why God created you: to serve. In the nursery, in the kitchen, on the various committees, in your home, in your community.’” Eldredge, 6.

²⁴⁷In John 13, Jesus is in the upper room with his disciples for the Last Supper. In that pivotal hour for the human race (having dealt with a group of disciples who were more interested in discussing who would be the greatest in the kingdom than extending themselves to each other) Jesus got up, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. He poured water into a basin and then began to wash his disciple’s feet. It was a perfect example of one who came to serve and not be served.

deep relationships that both encourage and bring healing (Romans 12:15) while teaching others to do so as well (John 13:14). An individual cannot be true disciple of Christ's and refrain from entering into meaningful, self-sacrificing fellowship.

Men and women view leadership and power in different ways.²⁴⁸ The preacher would do well to encourage women to engage in service that not only includes kitchen duties but one that includes a leadership role in loving, caring and encouraging relationships that build up her home and the house of God.²⁴⁹ The church cries out for women who have a vision of a powerful God, who is unleashed through personal and vital fellowship of serving believers.

Summary

The church has been commissioned, as one of its primary goals to oversee the life-transformation of each of its members, until they are deeply committed to Christ and to each other, exercising their spiritual gifts for the building up of the whole body and the

²⁴⁸Mathews notes that men and women differ in their approach to leadership and power in a number of significant ways. She references a 1998 study by Cindy Rosenthal of women elected to state legislatures that found that women worked more through "... interpersonal networks and cooperating parties" seeking to bring about change by empowering others to do their job, while men in the study were highly leader-centered, working in hierarchies, "... pitting competing interests against one another." They were more comfortable in their leading by exercising power over others. The women in the study were much more motivated than the men by people's needs and how a particular law would help or hurt them. She compares the two leadership styles to that of an octopus which has a central brain and many hands to do its bidding and a goose who shares a vision of the south with the gaggle. Power is there to get things done, to influence, not to be used to coerce and to dominate. Her conclusion is that we must reject traditional top-down leadership in the Church (of which Christ is the head) which seeks to control behavior and give way to servant leadership styles that promotes transformational living spurred on by deeper levels of commitment to Christ. This results in freedom to live responsibly. Mathews, 129. Hilary Lips said that generally men and women's interactional styles in our culture differ, with women's emphasizing communication and men's emphasizing dominance. Lips, 172.

²⁴⁹Proverbs 14:1 says, "The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down." A home is a very worthy place to build fellowship. "Every woman has a 'house,' an immediate sphere of influence. If you are married, if you have children, your family is the closest and most important circle of influence. Single women also have a 'house'; it encompasses those lives they touch within their extended family, their church, their workplace, and their community. A wise woman is actively involved in building her house on a daily basis . . ." Nancy Leigh DeMoss, *Biblical Womanhood in the Home*, ed. Nancy Leigh DeMoss (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2002), 83.

salvation of the lost. When a woman is convinced of her created importance and God's loving designs on her, she can and will worship as a response of thankfulness and praise for his goodness and begin to minister effectively from the overflow of a full heart embracing the biblical mandate to loving all in need. When she is called to obedience in evangelism and other aspects of Christian maturity by a faithful servant of God who understands and fans her unique, relational, caring nature and bent towards mercy, she will begin to traverse the gap created by sin and participate with all the believing community in God's five-fold purposes for her life. Male preachers must continually direct the women in their audience to a God who is all-sufficient to bring about all he desires in them.

CHAPTER 3 THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review provides short summaries of the most helpful resources in the study of gender, psychology and epistemology as applied to the study of the differences between men and women. Each of these studies was selected for its contributions toward helping the preacher better understand these differences (and similarities) so that he may better relate the sermon to the women in his audience. It also includes a brief review of some very helpful books on preaching so that the minister can better synthesize audience and message.

Physiology

Deborah Blum argues in *Sex on the Brain* her conviction that biology effects behavior.²⁵⁰ She believes that gender roles, customarily followed in the larger culture are a result of the biological effects of hormones and brain physiology. She links, through an abundance of statistical evidence, male aggressive patterns (physical) and risk-taking, female nurture and care, and the differences in emotional responses and communication patterns to our genes. Many of her findings would be of great interest to anyone studying the effects of biology on gender. Though she says that she is not a proponent of strict determinism, and at times asserts her belief that both nature and nurture²⁵¹ combine to bring about behavioral responses, her heavy tilt toward that opinion puts her in a difficult position that she shares with others with her strong presuppositional lean. They are left to explain how human beings can exert personal freedom of choice (which she believes they can and must do for societal harmony) if they are so highly programmed by biology. It is

²⁵⁰Throughout her book, Blum continually points to unstoppable evolutionary forces at work as she observes significant gender differences in the culture.

²⁵¹She sees nurture's part in sex differences largely in societal pressures exerted upon women.

as if she wants to say that human male and female response is largely robotic (based on her studies) but understands all too clearly the implications of such a hard position.

Blum sees a power differential between men and women written, at least in part, into their DNA but believes they must fight against such propensities and make conscious choices that complex beings must make to make things different and better. When they do this, then their choices will turn around and affect their biological make-up. Since her emphasis throughout the book is clearly in the direction of nurture being a byproduct of nature, the readers may be left confused as they try to synthesize her beliefs.

Doreen Kimura, a Professor of Psychology at Simon Fraser University, aims in her book, *Sex and Cognition*, to provide an intelligible overview of the field of sex differences in cognition. She, like Blum, traces the core of differences back to evolutionary causes and a need to survive in an environment which was very unlike the present one. Kimura goes into some detailed accounts (helpfully illustrated) of important testing done on both men and women to buttress her assertions of male or female superiority (or inferiority) in a number of areas such as spatial rotation ability, mathematical reasoning, verbal memory and motor skills.

She lays out her case that cognitive differentiation of the sexes is strongly influenced by current and/or past hormonal environments. These hormonal mechanisms have an organizing effect on sex-specific brains that in turn result in a variety of sexually dimorphic behaviors in the area of cognition. Her study in this area of hormonal interplay with the brain is an important one when considering women's cognition. It may be a key not only to discovering to what degree the introduction of male and female hormones into the body determine whether a child (or adult) will exhibit typical male or

female behavioral patterns, but whether they will exhibit cognitive patterns found to be generally sex-specific.

Geneticist Anne Moir writing with journalist David Jessel in their book, *Brain Sex*, advance the discussion in two ways. First, though they parrot Kimura in her strong beliefs that hormonal environment plays a major role not only in cognition but also in behavioral patterns of male and females, they delve more deeply than the others in their conviction that the material brain itself, the hardware in people's heads, is pre-wired to interact differently with sex-specific hormones. They highlight studies that show there are structural distinctions between the male and female brain which, when introduced with those hormones,²⁵² result in various differences (which many had always intuitively accepted) that are now widely acknowledged (in their view) by the scientific community.

They also add to the discussion by freely dispensing personal advice on what they feel are the logical implications of their findings. They believe that since male and females are, based upon their inborn brain biases, apt to explore, play, and generally gravitate towards their strengths, no one should hinder them from doing so. Those differences which are inborn will, despite all efforts, persist and strengthen as children grow, becoming a veritable chasm of difference by adolescence. Society should not hinder males and females from doing those tasks which they are biologically better suited

²⁵²Their study on the affect of hormonal interplay (which support the view that typical female hormones have a much stronger impact on a female brains and typical male hormones have a much stronger influence on a male brain than when introduced to the opposite sex artificially) is one of the more interesting and compelling findings in their book. They discuss at length cases of damaged brains and show that different functions of the brain are handled differently in male and females. They believe that their studies show that a generally accurate picture of the average man or woman would appear if not for the political environment which prohibits it. The conclusions have far reaching implications for those who believe a gender-neutral society can be obtained through reeducation.

to do.²⁵³ Their advice, though thought provoking (and a logical end to some of their presuppositions), can lead to disturbing conclusions. There is no room for judging human behavior no matter how deviant since all is in the end a matter of biology.

Steven Rhoads in his book, *Taking Sex Differences Seriously*, concurs with many of the implications of Moir and Jessel's findings. He scoffs at much of the present counter-natural sex-role literature that is required reading on college campuses and argues once again, from a biological perspective, that males and females are inherently different. He confines his study in his book to traditional behaviors or passions that he says have not changed through generations – sex, nurturing and aggression (or competitiveness). He argues that the different ways in which those three manifest themselves in males and females are in fact evidence of a difference in “nature” which will always reveal itself through societal attempts to legislate (an outgrowth of the culture wars) or educate them out.²⁵⁴

Rhoads offers comparative culture studies (studies aimed at a wide swath of societies and centuries), evolutionary psychology (implanted through the ages), and brain structure and hormones²⁵⁵ to bolster his claim that most differences between the sexes are not socially based. He believes that the natural differences between the sexes impact all of life and should impact public policy to a much greater extent than it presently does.

²⁵³They believe that males and females are pressured to engage regularly in functions that they are less equipped to be successful at. The result will be failure (or less success), a burden of guilt, and loss of self esteem. Perhaps, as they muse, the definition of what success is needs to be changed.

²⁵⁴Rhoads strongly believes that many who are involved in what some consider stereotypical behavior are in fact happier with their lives in spite of a generation of feminist education that says the opposite.

²⁵⁵Rhoads offers evidence that women's brains seem to be networked while men's are more compartmentalized. He, along with the previous authors, believes that the level of testosterone at key junctures of development determine levels of aggression, assertion, and dominance.

Marianne Van Den Wijngaard in her book, *Reinventing the Sexes*, examines how traditional views of femininity and masculinity, feminist intellectual thought, and the male underpinnings in the field of gender research have influenced and led to modification of scientific practice. She rejects much of the conventional thinking in sex research. She believes that cultural ideas about gender have unduly influenced how scientists themselves have studied this volatile subject, and she examines processes which have led scientists and physicians to hold dualistic images of femininity and masculinity. Van Den Wijngaard offers a detailed historical analysis of how the organization theory of men and women arose, related to the need in both biology and psychology to find an explanation for increasingly entrenched, dualistic gender roles. She believes that feminism helped to stabilize and somewhat change these entrenched images, though not to the extent that feminists realize.

Overall, the book offers her thoughts and evaluation of how dualistic ideology about sex, gender, and hormones burrowed into science (and clinical practice), and how feminism interacted with the whole process. Van Den Wijngaard would question the validity of much of the conclusions of established gender research since she questions the moorings upon which they were established.

Feminist author Anne Fausto-Sterling, an associate professor of medical science at Brown University, also questions gender assumptions based upon studies by leading sociobiologists concerning hormone theory, brain “wiring,” cognitive, verbal and spatial ability among others. In *Myths of Gender*²⁵⁶ she attempts in a systematic way to debunk conventional biological explanations (and evolutionary organizing frameworks) as

²⁵⁶ Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Myths of Gender* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1985).

acceptable explanations for human behavior. She attributes most, if not all of previous research in the area, to scientists' limited cultural vision and political leanings and to the fact that the rubric of sexual development has always been an analytical account of male development with women being absent from major discussions on theories concerning sexual differentiation. Her desires are that those involved in gender studies release biology from its "sacrosanct status as First Cause" and develop a new model based on new analytical frameworks that consider the unpredictability of human behavior.

Richard A. Lippa in *Gender, Nature and Nurture*²⁵⁷ gives perhaps the most well-rounded summary of findings on gender amounting to a primer on this field of research. Competing theories are dissected and wider-ranging implications from concerns surrounding the political policy debate to child rearing are discussed. His conclusions seem to steer clear of what he considers both the exaggerated claims of determinists and the minimalist view of the social constructionists coming to rest with those who believe in variations within each sex. He recognizes that strong evidence exists that nature contributes to human sex differences while at the same time shows how social environment also has a powerful influence on the phenomena of gender.

Psychology

Psychologist Carol Gilligan, who was an associate and co-author with groundbreaking ethicist Lawrence Kohlberg, outlined in her important volume, *In a Different Voice*, how she came to see a major flaw in Kohlberg's widely accepted stages of moral development. Her book and views are broadly quoted, attacked, and dissected in the field of women's psychology.

²⁵⁷Richard A. Lippa, *Gender, Nature and Nurture* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2002).

She determined that since his conclusions were based exclusively upon interviews with male subjects, his stages did not accurately reflect what was normative for all human adults but instead reflected a decidedly male orientation in discussions on advanced moral thought. She came to believe that his studies (and others where women are seen to be the deviant in studies) completely missed a distinctively female voice on matters of morality and that moral development proceeded in more than one direction.²⁵⁸ Yet, she believes that in the “different voice” of women lies the truth of an ethic of care, the tie between relationship and responsibility, and the origins of aggression in the failure of connection. For a woman, the ideal is not impersonal justice but more affiliative ways of living.²⁵⁹

The failure to see the different reality of women's lives and to hear the differences in their voices stems in part from the assumption that there is a single mode of social experience and interpretation. By positing instead two different modes, she believes people will arrive at a more complex rendition of human experience which sees the truth of separation and attachment in the lives of women and men and recognizes how these truths are carried by different modes of language and thought.

Gay Hubbard in *Women: The Misunderstood Majority* believes that a lack of understanding of a woman's gender-distinctive needs, characteristics, and life experience, on the part of those who minister to them, has proven to be hazardous to women's spiritual, psychological and mental health. She believes that, too often, women with

²⁵⁸While one line (male) focuses on logic, justice, and social organization, the other (female) focuses on interpersonal relationships and connectedness rather than people standing alone adhering to a system of rules.

²⁵⁹She found that women's morality is more contextualized; it is tied to real, ongoing relationships rather than abstract solutions to hypothetical dilemmas.

devastated self-images, who do not even know what to believe about themselves, are offered little help by professionals inside and outside of the church because of a lack of knowledge and because of deeply ingrained, culturally defined notions of masculinity and femininity. Hubbard believes that many women seek professional counseling simply because they do not feel that they measure up to a stereotypical picture of mental health based (as Gilligan has asserted) upon a masculine standard.

Hubbard believes that myths (false notions that women believe about themselves) both old and new must be sifted through by counselors to bring healing to women. Tenets of the “Old Mythology,”²⁶⁰ with its mix of truths and falsehoods, must be torn down. Likewise, in Hubbard’s view, the “New Mythology”²⁶¹ which has arisen amidst a sea of social change in recent years is an interference which negatively influences the counseling process. The new mythology (that women are in no way different from men,²⁶² that women need to operate by the same rules and roles as men, and that they function in the same manner with regards to relationships) needs to be rejected.²⁶³ The

²⁶⁰These include such notions as: men’s work is more valuable than a women’s; women are emotional so unable to make good decisions; a woman is incomplete without a male in her life; women are essentially untrustworthy and manipulative; a woman’s love, alone, can change a man or a families dysfunction; a woman needs to be unselfish to the point of never attending to her own needs; good relationships are all that a woman really needs to bring a sense of joy and accomplishment; a woman’s body is the source of her identity; power and true femininity cannot coexist; and the belief in the 19th Century notion of the “cult of womanhood” (piety, purity, submission, and domesticity).

²⁶¹These include the notion that women should in a sense become more masculine by adopting male character traits, or that they should minimize the importance of relationships (which is looked at as a female deficiency) and instead adopt the masculine tendency toward separation instead of attachment characteristic of femininity.

²⁶²That the differences are confined to biological distinctions in genital structure and functioning with all supposed differences finding their origin in gender socialization.

²⁶³She shows how this, as well as the myth that life patterns are best for women that follow after those of white, male, middle class attitudes and norms (i.e. concerning the importance of money, controlling assets, time spent in “real” work, adopting attitudes that define sex apart from relationship and as a primary means to obtain power, and that achievement is the only source of self-esteem and satisfaction) are hurtful to women.

author finds great fault in the polarization present in churches who tell women that they can either replicate a male life career pattern (aggressively and competitively dominating others independent of relationships) or seek no achievement outside the home. She sees both old and new methods of power-grabbing as psychologically unfeasible and biblically unsound. She believes that men who willingly acknowledge the problems with the male-type pattern of achieving can be of great benefit to these women.

Beverly White Hislop in *Shepherding a Woman's Heart* writes to help women not only see the pressing need in the local church for greater pastoral care for the multitude of hurting women, but to see themselves as the ones who can best meet that need. In the process, she gives very helpful insight into the psychological needs of women which can be of great benefit to any preacher seeking to effectively minister and inspire from the pulpit.²⁶⁴

Effective care starts with compassion and then moves to the deeper issues that are the source of pain.²⁶⁵ She delves into the reasons for much of the emotional pain of women.²⁶⁶ She believes that many (not all) of the differences²⁶⁷ between men and women are a result of the creative hand of God and are inborn. Those differences were

²⁶⁴Those ministering to women must understand a woman's "seasons" of life" and the different challenges that are presented during each. They must also understand how a woman *comes to know* (cognition) *psychological aspects* of her make up and her need for *communication*.

²⁶⁵In her decades of working with women, she has seen a much greater need than men to talk through their experiences before proceeding to directive steps. She believes that preachers do great damage and bypass the most important step when they tell these women that the answer is to read the Bible more and pray or even try harder to love God as a remedy for their pain.

²⁶⁶Much of the emotional pain that women experience is related to the fact that they were created to be life-bearers and life nurturers. It is part of their psychological make up whether married or single. They also endure physiological seasons of life which also generate pain. They must deal with things like PMS, childbirth, or menopause and the physical impact of abortion. They suffer when their relationships are in distress.

²⁶⁷Hislop believes, as does Hubbard (whom she quotes), that men and women are alike and different.

meant for good, but the fall and sin have made what were complementary desires and yearnings points of pain and contention. Hislop believes that women who shepherd other women (and pastors who do so from the pulpit) must recognize identifiable issues that impact women and address them,²⁶⁸ if they hope to see life change at any level.

Epistemology

Women's Ways of Knowing was probably the book which appeared in more bibliographies than any other during this course of study. The authors' study²⁶⁹ has become the benchmark when considering how a woman's self-concept is intertwined with the ways in which they come to understand the world around them. They identified five different perspectives from which women view reality and from which they draw conclusions about truth, knowledge and authority.

Building on the work of others such as Carol Gillian, Nona Lyons, Jean Baker Miller and Nancy Chodorow,²⁷⁰ the first part of the book concerns itself with a detailed description of the five categories of knowing²⁷¹ and the impact (and consequences) that these ways of knowing have upon the women from these differing epistemological

²⁶⁸Those include the fact that women struggle more with relational issues than men. They seem to establish basic identity through relationships of intimacy and nurture. They have a continuing need for affiliation and intimacy. Hislop sees in them a sense of self that is organized around making and maintaining relationships, not self-improvement or power.

²⁶⁹They concentrated their studies and interviews with 135 women located in one of two "institutions," that they saw as "... devoted to human development – the family and the schools ...". Belenky, 4. Some have suggested that the relatively small number of women involved in the study, and the fact that they were all local (as opposed to an international sampling), weakens the study and its findings.

²⁷⁰Their studies in gender related differences and moral perspectives have found that a woman's concept of self is more tied to responsibility rooted in connection and relatedness to others than a man's, whose rights orientation dovetail with their own definition of self as separate and autonomous.

²⁷¹They are: (1) Silence; (2) Received Knowledge; (3) Subjective Knowledge; (4) Procedural Knowledge; and (5) Constructed Knowledge.

perspectives. In part two of their work, the authors put the five ways of knowing in the context of the family and school development. They show the common threads of experience and upbringing that often weave their way through the lives of the women in each category.

The authors believe strongly that schools today are oriented toward male learning. Although the present system may seem natural, it is in fact not so for most women. They believe that the only acceptable aim of education for women is to develop them intellectually, ethically and epistemologically. The final portion of the book offers their suggestions for achieving that.

Although Alice Mathews' book, *Preaching That Speaks to Women*, could conceivably fit into any of the categories in this literature review, much of its value is in the clarity it gives to understanding how women come to know the world around them. The author's goal in writing this book was to help male readers "step virtually inside the skin of a woman"²⁷² so that they may more effectively communicate God's Word with a goal of life change. Mathews' desire was to help those who preach on a regular basis to be able to clearly proclaim the good news of grace and forgiveness to women who, in most cases, form the greater portion of most congregations on any given Sunday morning, so that they may be able to love God with all their hearts, minds and strength. But, to do so, the preacher must come to some understanding of how a woman thinks and experiences the world around her. The preacher must know something about the experiences of women, as women, and that they are all individuals with no two exactly alike. This will in part determine if he is an effective communicator.

²⁷²Mathews, *Preaching That Speaks*, 17.

Mathews believes that it is important to understand that, although women come to know in certain ways, those ways are not written in stone for a lifetime. Women change and can come to know in different ways. Sometimes the change is healthy and leads women (and men) to love God with their minds in a more healthy way, and sometimes that is not the case. Mathews believes that an effective preacher himself must come to know how his audience comes to know. She reminds the reader that there is a large gap between women's way of knowing and men's; however, there is one thing that they share which is a hunger for God's answers to their pressing problems delivered in a manner that is not pat or canned but by one who has struggled with the issues and found God to be sufficient to meet the needs.

Since the way in which a preacher speaks of God and faith can have a powerful effect on the women in his audience, Mathews offers a number of specific suggestions on how women, characterized by any one of the five epistemological categories, can be helped to move along to the next level so they may find confidence in a powerful, loving God who is able to meet their everyday needs. Since women come to truth in different ways, often having to overcome a multitude of different and sometimes difficult barriers to do so, the preacher must be mindful of who his audience is. Depending on where they are on the epistemological ladder of receiving truth, they will encounter different problems in trying to love God with their whole minds.

The twin volumes by Alice Mathews (*A Woman God Can Use*²⁷³ and *A Woman Jesus Can Teach*²⁷⁴) are a series of messages of women drawn from both the Old and

²⁷³ Alice Mathews, *A Woman God Can Use* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 1990).

²⁷⁴ Alice Mathews, *A Woman Jesus Can Teach* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 1991).

New Testaments. Although the specific goal of these volumes is not to teach in a systematic way of how women come to know, it becomes obvious to the reader that these women do experience shifts in understanding, trust and love of God throughout. As the women studied learn to make personal choices (wise and poor), they come to understand God, His world and themselves more intimately. In that way, they are books on how women come to know.

Homiletics

Several books are helpful in contributing to the overall knowledge of making biblical, relevant sermons that move people toward life change. A very helpful volume is Haddon Robinson's edited volume, *Biblical Sermons*.²⁷⁵ It enables the reader to peruse a number of sermons from different speakers (both male and female) and then read critiques of each from the speaker (by way of interview) and from Haddon Robinson. From the practical questions²⁷⁶ asked, the reader is able to compare and contrast the various authors and see how they work their craft to persuade people. Since the genres were different for each sermon and no two preachers seemed to approach the task in exactly the same way, the reader is able to learn a great deal about what works and what does not in communicating clearly.

Another helpful work was *Creating Understanding*²⁷⁷ by Donald K. Smith. Smith's book is built around twenty-three propositions concerning Christian communication that he believes, when taken together, run the gamut of basic truths concerning the subject.

²⁷⁵Haddon W. Robinson, ed., *Biblical Sermons*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989).

²⁷⁶Questions such as: How long does it take you to do your thing? How do you start? How long do you preach? How do you gather information? Where do you get illustrations from?

²⁷⁷Donald K. Smith, *Creating Understanding* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992).

The book is guided by three foundational presuppositions.²⁷⁸ Simply understanding the message is essential but it is not enough. The preacher must understand the values and beliefs that the audience holds dear and the culture through which they filter all incoming messages. The preacher must also decide upon a game plan that includes goals and purpose so that he knows where he is going or communication will be hindered.²⁷⁹ Along with this, the communicator must be open to God using his personality and life experiences.²⁸⁰ All these and more help to create understanding.

Michael Duduit's *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching* is a thorough overview of preaching from many of the masters and is broken up into eight main sections, each dealing with a different homiletical topic.²⁸¹ The authors touch on just about every important topic that pertains to biblical communication, although the reader may feel overwhelmed with all there is to know and be. Many of the authors admit that pastoring and preaching present a difficult and at times seemingly impossible job for an individual to undertake, but they nevertheless raise the bar of expectations in a number of ways.

²⁷⁸They are: (1) All communication is cross-cultural to some degree; (2) Culture is the way we organize our experiences to develop a worldview, values, beliefs, a social framework, and behavior patterns; (3) Communication is the human part of proclamation and discipling. The Spirit of God works inwardly to produce response and transformation.

²⁷⁹The questions which the preacher must ask himself every time an attempt is made to communicate is, "Why am I doing this?" and "What do I want to see happen in the lives of the primary audience to whom I am speaking to as a result of our time together?"

²⁸⁰Smith says that approximately 80% of the information load in a typical communication is carried through emotion, and 20% or less by reason. That will vary in different communicative settings but what must be remembered is that whenever we want to see change, at the very deepest levels of an individual or a culture, emotions play a very central role. Emotions should be touched if change is to occur.

²⁸¹The sections are: (1) The Roots of Contemporary Preaching; (2) Contemporary Preaching Methods; (3) Preparing the Sermon; (4) Preaching the Biblical Text; (5) Presenting the Sermon; (6) Preaching and the Ministry; (7) Preaching to the Needs of People; and (8) Special Concerns in Contemporary Preaching.

This may be the most helpful all-round single volume for the budding preacher who is determined to communicate with purpose.

Haddon and Torrey Robinson's excellent little volume, *It's All in How You Tell It*,²⁸² deals with the creative and impactful method of preaching a text by use of first person narrative. This creative approach is built upon solid exegesis of an arresting character delivered in dramatic fashion, and weds the power of story and the power of drama into a work that brings about not only a memorable experience for the listener, but one which may drive home theological truth more than conventional preaching.

Haddon Robinson's classic, *Biblical Preaching*, offers a step-by-step blueprint in building expository, relevant biblical sermons that travel from the pages of the Word to the heart of the listener. Centered around "the Big Idea" of the passage, Robinson shows how an effective communicator must preach concepts taken directly from the text, applied through the expositor himself,²⁸³ and delivered to the need before him.

Summary

If they hope to communicate more effectively to the women that they regularly minister to, male preachers must better understand their unique make-up, so that they can bring to bear God's truth to the challenges they face. These books were some of the most helpful to the author in coming to a more adequate understanding of the physiological, psychological and cognitive aspects of women as well as in communicating God's truth to a general audience.

²⁸²Haddon W. Robinson and Torrey W. Robinson, *It's All in How You Tell It* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003).

²⁸³Quoting Phillips Brooks, Robinson calls it "... truth poured through personality." Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 24.

CHAPTER 4

THE WOMEN'S SURVEY AND THE FOCUS GROUPS

The purpose of this thesis is to offer suggestions to male preachers on how they can more effectively relate the sermon to women as a segment of their audiences. To do that, male preachers must understand something of the physiological, psychological and epistemological differences between men and women and how an understanding of those general differences impacts the way their female listeners may hear the sermon. The goal is to seek more effective methods of exposition and presentation, in order that women may better reflect the image of God and his call upon their lives.

The two-fold purpose of the research methods explained in this chapter was, first, to examine whether or not the studies engaged in by the author were consistent with current thought on gender differences²⁸⁴ and to determine how those differences, if any, impacted the preacher's presentation. The second purpose was to see whether a deliberate attempt to highlight women in the scriptures²⁸⁵ would be an effective method to engage more deeply the hearts of women in the congregation.

The Women's Survey

The first prong of this two-prong research program was a questionnaire to test various psychological and epistemological theories mentioned in chapter one. Most of the questions included in the survey came from various social science studies. The survey was constructed to explore the following areas of women's experience- psychology, moral development, epistemological position, self-esteem, and life

²⁸⁴The women's survey questions tested whether Christian women fell into the mainstream of thought in the area of women's psychology and epistemology, and if not, then in what areas they tended to deviate.

²⁸⁵The preaching series with a woman as the main focus of the narrative was something new to the author, as well as to everyone else in the congregation.

experiences. The purpose was to assess the ways in which evangelical Christian women resemble, or differ from women in the wider culture, as reported by various researchers.

The questionnaire was administered to four different groups of women over a period of eighteen months. The pilot study, in which about seventy-five women participated, was administered to those attending a conference at the writer's church.²⁸⁶ The reach of the questionnaire was greatly expanded when the conference speaker offered to send it to her wide constituency.²⁸⁷ The third group came from divinity students at an evangelical seminary in Massachusetts.²⁸⁸ Finally, it was made available on the internet to a very large group of women who were associated with a number of evangelical denominations.²⁸⁹ In total, 1,201 women completed the survey.

The individual women surveyed were denominational executives, conference speakers, women in business, theology students, homemakers and high school students. They came from a wide range of educational, economic and family backgrounds. They were single, married and divorced. Their ages ranged from thirteen to over sixty-five. Although this is not a scientific survey, nor could it stand up under the strict rigors of

²⁸⁶The West Essex Baptist Church in Livingston, New Jersey.

²⁸⁷The featured speaker at the conference that year, Jennie Dimkoff, was excited to hear of this ongoing study. She volunteered to send an email out when she returned home to the women who belonged to her professional speaker's organization, enlisting their help in the effort to garner additional women who would take the survey. As a result of her efforts, between fifty and one hundred more surveys were completed and added to those already finished by the women at the conference.

²⁸⁸The author asked Dr. Alice Mathews if she would distribute the survey to some of the women in her classes at Gordon Conwell Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. She did, and several dozen more responses were received.

²⁸⁹The women who responded to the survey were involved in The Evangelical Free Church, the American Baptists, the Baptist General Conference, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Christian and Missionary Alliance and other denominational groups. Because of the manner in which the survey went out, the identification of all of the church groups participating was impossible to determine. More than one thousand additional survey responses came back from the internet survey. Just over 95 percent of the responders considered themselves to be "Born-again."

such, and, although some critics have pointed out that several of the questions were worded poorly, there are some important things that can be learned from the survey results.²⁹⁰

The Focus Groups

The second prong of this research program was a preaching series in which biblical women were protagonists in the sermons. The series lasted for ten weeks, and worked from narratives with both familiar and unfamiliar women as the main character in the story.²⁹¹ Following the sermon series, the focus-group participants were asked to listen to four sermons from the series,²⁹² take notes as they listened (if they wished), then attend a focus group discussion. The discussions involved thirty-two people who were regular attendees of the West Essex Baptist Church. The groups numbered anywhere from five (fewest) to nine (most) people. All five of the focus groups were moderated by Associate Pastor, John Marcott.

The participants were first asked to provide short answers to six questions²⁹³ which were then followed by a discussion time. The questions were designed to determine whether women would relate to and understand a biblical narrative better if the central figure was a woman. In doing so, they would also come to understand the doctrines

²⁹⁰A thorough discussion of the findings of the women's study can be found in Chapter Five and by referring to Appendix D.

²⁹¹The women who were the subjects of the sermon series were: Eve (selected passages); the woman of Zeraphath (1 Kings 17); Abigail (1 Samuel 25); Leah (Genesis 29); the woman at the well (John 4); Mary and Martha (Luke 10); the grateful woman (Luke 7); the sick woman (Mark 5); the woman taken in sin (John 8); and Mary, the mother of Jesus (selected passages).

²⁹²The four sermons selected for discussion were those concerning: (1) The Woman of Zeraphath; (2) Abigail; (3) Leah, and (4) The Woman Taken in Sin.

²⁹³The questions and the participants' written answers are recorded just as they wrote them in Appendix B.

being espoused in the passage more intimately. The author also wanted to determine if the fact that the main characters were women would detract from both the interest and understanding of the biblical narrative for the men in the group. In addition, the author wanted to ascertain the effectiveness of narrative preaching as a genre among all the participants, with closer attention being paid to the reaction of the women in the groups.²⁹⁴

The meetings lasted anywhere from 1½ to 1¾ hours. The five focus group meetings occurred over the course of a three-week period in August of 2004.²⁹⁵ The ages, sex, and social and economic background of the participants of the groups varied, being generally in line with the make-up of the local church with which they were involved.²⁹⁶

The Two Studies Complemented Each Other

The survey and the sermon series seemed to validate each other in important areas. The survey revealed that Christian women do highly prize relationship and an ethic of care. They gravitated toward, and were inspired by, the women in the series who displayed care (the woman of Zeraphath and Abigail). They felt the pain of those who were left in vulnerable positions (Leah and the woman taken in sin). The survey also showed that the character and understanding of the messenger who brings truth is a vital component in whether that truth is accepted or not.

²⁹⁴Based upon the findings in chapter one, the author wanted to determine if the highly relational nature of these narratives impacted the women (in their opinion) to the same degree as a typical didactic passage did. The author had just concluded a series through the book of James when the series on women began.

²⁹⁵All five focus group meetings were recorded. A complete word-for-word transcript of the meetings can be examined in Appendix C.

²⁹⁶Brief biographical sketches of each of the participants of the focus groups can be seen at the beginning of Appendix B. At least eight of the thirty-two participants were not born in the United States. Most of the people from that immigrant group speak English as a second language.

The survey and the focus groups also showed that some historic stereotypes did not find much support among the women in the survey,²⁹⁷ or in the response to the central figures in the sermon series. Other long-held beliefs related to character traits found strong support (gentle, emotional, neat).

While the survey indicated a strong belief (which is shared by the culture) that men and women are different, the focus groups both acknowledged those differences in their response to the sermons while at the same time indicating that the differences are not so large as to make the narrative form of preaching unappealing to either sex.

²⁹⁷Such as the widely understood notion that women are passive while men are active. The women in the focus groups indicated that they were inspired by those women in the sermon series who actively brought about protection and good.

CHAPTER 5

THE WOMEN’S SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

The survey and focus group results reveal a number of things about Christian women who populate and serve at the author’s local church and in local churches across the country. Many of the findings can help the preacher understand and better prepare to communicate more effectively to the women in his audience.

The Women’s Survey Results

The questionnaire was administered to four different groups of women²⁹⁸ over a period of eighteen months. In all, a total of 1,201 women filled out the survey. It must be noted that not all of the personal background statistics gathered from the respondents were included in the final analysis.²⁹⁹ Analysis of personal information was limited to income, age and educational experience of the respondents. It must also be noted that more than five hundred additional women began the survey but, for unknown reasons, did not complete it. None of their responses were included in the final results. Below are some observations from the survey results. The survey itself along with an extensive statistical breakdown of those results can be found in Appendix D.

When asked to choose from four responses to the inquiry “When I listen to a sermon, primarily I want . . .,” most women (60 percent) said that they were interested in gaining a better understanding of God’s Word. That was the overriding reason why they listened to a sermon. Almost a quarter (23 percent) said that they hoped to walk away with some help with the daily problems of life that they face. Since knowing that a clearer

²⁹⁸The groups that contributed to the survey came from: (1) the author’s home church; (2) a professional speaker’s organization; (3) a group of divinity students; (4) and women from evangelical denominations that had been contacted by way of the internet.

²⁹⁹Things such as country of origin, marital and family status, and the number of years they have been in their church were left out in the final analysis since it was discovered that the software used to collect the data was inadequate to tabulate each of the personal categories.

understanding of God's Word is a help to those facing the challenges of life, the preacher must question whether too sharp a line can be drawn between the two top responses. One thing was clear: Women do not come to church to hear sermons primarily on role clarification.³⁰⁰ The percentage of women desiring direction in their roles as a woman, as a primary reason to listen to a sermon went steadily down with increasing educational advances. Most (74 percent), when asked if they were encouraged to think for themselves in the sermons they heard, said *yes*.

When asked what single functional question³⁰¹ they most want answered when reading the Bible personally or hearing it read in church, the overwhelming choice was "how does this apply to my life?" Sixty-six percent of the women polled were looking for application when reading the Bible. This desire was most prevalent with those women with only some high school training (76 percent) and least with the graduate level women (59 percent). A quarter (24 percent) wanted to know "what does this mean?" Interestingly, only 2 percent on average (with a high of 4 percent for college graduates) said that the question they asked themselves most was "is this true?" Out of 114 women who answered this question in the "Some high school/high school graduates" category, only one single individual said that she asks herself "is it true?" when reading the Bible on her own or hearing it read in church. Born-again Christian women want to know how

³⁰⁰Under 7 percent checked that response, although the wording of the question would not necessarily exclude teaching on this.

³⁰¹The functional questions a preacher needs to ask of an exegetical idea to fully develop thought are: "What does this mean?"; "Is it true?"; and "What difference does it make?"

the truth of God's Word can help them on a Monday morning. Their trust in the truth of His Word appears to be a given. This is a comforting place to start for the preacher.³⁰²

When asked how they deal with stressful situations, 32 percent of the women overall responded that they deal with it by attempting to modify the situation that is causing the stress and then seek to make changes in their environment. Young women, twenty-seven to thirty-five years old, choose this option in highest numbers (41 percent to only 27 percent for women in the fifty-five to sixty-four year old range). Twenty-five percent said, that in stressful situations, they "look at the situations from a different perspective that lets me change the meaning of the situation." Only 14 percent responded to stress by trying to manage negative feelings or deny that they exist. Almost 29 percent checked "none of the above" and gave individually written out answers.

Depression is a major problem with women across the board in this culture. Often, it is brought on by long-term stressful situations. When asked what makes them most depressed, almost six in ten (57 percent) said that they get depressed "when conflicts arise or disruption occurs in a close personal relationship."³⁰³ The percentage in this category was highest by far for women over sixty-five years (72 percent). Only 22 percent said that not reaching a personal goal or performing poorly at a task was the chief reason for their depression. Emotional distress in women is most prevalent when their relationships are suffering. These women know when they are depressed, they know why

³⁰²These answers would suggest that if the preacher is not mindful of including strong application in the message he will lose large sections of his audience who may view the sermon as irrelevant.

³⁰³In a later question, the women were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with this statement, "I usually strive to subordinate my own wishes and actions to the desires of others." Over forty-two percent of the women *agreed* with that statement. Perhaps this is to maintain relationship.

they are depressed, and they are depressed much more often (than for any other reason) when their relationships are out of sync.

A series of questions were presented and the responders were asked to indicate the degree to which they *agreed* or *disagreed* with the statements. When asked to reply to the statement “Men are cognitive while women are emotional,” 60 percent either *agreed* or *strongly agreed*. The percentage of those who *agreed* with the statement went steadily down from high school graduates to women with graduate degrees. The more education that the women had completed, the less they agreed with the statement.

When asked their opinion of the statement “Men are active while women are passive,” a total of 85 percent either *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* (51 percent and 34 percent respectively). Less than two percent strongly agreed with the statement. The idea of the passive evangelical woman is a myth according to this survey. Eighty-one percent of the women either *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with the statement “There are few differences between men and women aside from physical bodies.” Even the most highly educated of the women, the group the author most expected to lean toward a more egalitarian ideal, disagreed (80 percent). There is a strong sense among women of all ages and background and incomes that there are more than a few differences between males and females.

The follow-up statement took it one step further and brought a more evenly distributed response. Asked their opinion of the observation that “There are more differences between men and women than there are similarities,” just 44 percent *agreed* or *strongly agreed* while 36 percent *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed*. It was of interest to note that a large number (one in five) were *not sure*. It seems that women feel that the

differences between men and themselves are more than minor yet are not sure how far those differences extend. When asked what they thought about the statement on the cover of a very popular book from the 1990s “Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus,” half *agreed* or *strongly agreed* (53 percent) with the statement while 32 percent said that they were *not sure*, the largest such response on the survey. Fewer than 5 percent *strongly disagreed*.

When asked to comment on this statement, “Most male preachers I have listened to do not understand the life seasons, cycles and situations of the women in their audience,” 46 percent either *agreed* or *strongly agreed*. Thirty-one percent *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed*, while the rest were *not sure* (23 percent). Almost seven out of ten either had reason to doubt if the preacher understood their unique situations as women or were convinced that the preacher did not. Fifty-five percent of the women with some graduate studies behind them agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Four times as many women overall *strongly agreed* with the statement as *strongly disagreed*. The percentage of those women who *strongly disagreed* (that is, they believe that most male preachers do not understand the life seasons, cycles and situations of women) went from only a high of 7 percent (thirteen to eighteen year old) to a low of 0 percent (sixty-five and older). Women trust God’s Word as truth but wonder if the main messenger can effectively help them apply it to their unique life situation.

Next, a number of statements were offered prefaced by the question “Which of the following statements is true for you?” This section was designed in an open-ended fashion to allow the respondents to check as many (or as few) as applied to them personally. The results in descending order (the most checked responses on top) were:

1. Following the rules is very important (766 women checked this response as being true of them).
2. I place a higher value on being connected to those around me than on personal achievement (N=652).
3. I make decisions based primarily on what is right and fair and not on how it will affect relationships (N=641).
4. My self-image is closely tied to my ability to care for others (N=490).
5. My self-image is organized around my ability to make and maintain relationships (N=344).
6. I experience conflict when I must compete (N=317).
7. I make decisions primarily on how it will affect relationships and not necessarily by what is right and fair (N=192).

Four times as many women said that number one (above) was true of them as number seven. Women are concerned with their relationships and with connectedness, holding them as a high priority but not so high that they in large numbers would abandon a strong desire for rule-keeping, doing what is right, and maintaining their integrity.³⁰⁴

In another open-ended section, when asked about what type of sermons they like to hear and learn from, their answers follow, once again in descending order:

1. I like listening to sermons and learning about God's character (N=978).
2. I like listening to sermons and learning about God's love (N=960).

³⁰⁴It was of interest to note that in a previous question, which stated "When playing games, girls are more tolerant toward the game's rules than are boys and are willing to make more exceptions," 45 percent of the women either *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with the statement with over 26 percent saying that they were *not sure*. Only 28 percent *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed*. Their answers for this question seem to fly in the face of their response that rule keeping is important to them. Perhaps, the discrepancy has something to do with the fact of the relative unimportance of game playing as compared to other weightier issues of life. Relationship may rise above rule keeping in this instance.

3. I like listening to sermons and learning about God's mercy (N=945).
4. I like listening to sermons and learning about God's power (N=896).
5. I like listening to sermons and learning about justice (N=784).
6. I like listening to sermons and learning about judgment (N=513).

The women responding to this section preferred sermons about God's character, power, mercy and love over ones speaking of His justice and judgment. It was of interest to note the dramatically higher number of responses to this section concerning preference of sermon subjects than to the personal response issues on the previous page (5,076 responses compared with 3,402). Many women seemed to have skipped over the first section altogether indicating a greater comfort level with providing answers to the second, less personal set of statements.

The next seven statements required a simple *true* or *false* answer from the participants. Here is what they had to say. To the question "I have little sense of control over my life," their answer by a better than four to one margin was *false*. Ninety-five percent of those sixty-five and older answered *false*, while just over 76 percent of those aged forty-six to fifty-four did so, the lowest total of all age groups. Those women with graduate degrees answered negatively just under 90 percent of the time, more than 10 percent higher than high school or college graduates. Advancing age and continuing education seem to have an impact on the issue of personal control. Overall, the women who took this survey did not feel as though they had lost control over their lives.

To the assertion, "I have a low sense of my worth and abilities," 81 percent overall said *false*. Women earning less than thirty thousand dollars a year agreed, but they did so in smaller numbers (70 percent) than women earning more than seventy-five thousand

dollars a year (84 percent). As in the previous question concerning control, the higher the educational experience, the higher the percentage of respondents who answered *false* to this question. Just over a third (34 percent) of those who went no further than earning a high school degree indicated that they did have a low sense of their worth and abilities while only 10 percent of those with graduate degrees did. A sense of worth in some measure seemed to be connected to how much money these women earned (family income) and the level of schooling they had completed.

Asked in a slightly different way, “I have a high sense of personal accomplishment in my life,” 71 percent said *true*. Again, the higher income and education corresponded with the higher sense of accomplishment. That was not the case with advancing age. Sixty percent of those sixty-five and over indicated that they *did not* have a high sense of accomplishment; almost eighteen percentage points higher than the next lowest group (forty-six to fifty-four year olds). In numbers far higher than any other age group, those women sixty-five years of age and older, when looking back on their life, struggle with whether they have accomplished that much after all.

The next statement, “I have a strong sense that who I am depends on another person,” was rejected by 88 percent of the women. That was the highest number in the true/false section of questions. When asked if they felt as if they received “a generous amount of support from friends and family,” 81 percent felt as if they did.

The next two statements resulted in the most evenly distributed responses for this section. Overall, 44 percent of the women answered *true* to the statement, “I worry about my relationships with significant people in my life,” though more than two out of three (67 percent) of those with just *some high school* said it was true of them (compared with

38 percent of those having finished graduate work.) The thirteen to twenty-six age group worried most (an average of 57 percent said *true*) while those in the *income under \$30 thousand* category answered *true* in numbers almost twenty percentage points more than those in the \$50-\$75 thousand range. Younger women and those in lower income brackets are worrying about significant relationships in their lives in higher numbers than others.

The next statement, “I feel as if I do not fit the mold of what a traditional feminine woman is supposed to be,” accurately described the sentiments of over half (54 percent) of the women responding to the survey. Only a third (33 percent) of the women sixty-five and over felt that way, while 57 percent of the nineteen to thirty-five year olds did. The results showed a steady rise from those with *some high school* (40 percent answered *true*) to the group with the highest percentage of *true* responses; those with graduate degrees (66 percent). The higher the educational experience, the greater the feeling seemed to be on the part of the respondents that they did not fit the feminine mold; the older they got the more they felt they did.

Twenty character traits were offered (the most frequently selected ones from Broverman’s list of male and female characteristics) and the women were asked to check any of them that they considered “female character traits.” The order was mixed up and traditionally opposite traits were not placed across from each other on the survey so as not to influence them. Again this was an open-ended section and the women could check off as many as they thought applied to them personally. Once again in descending order from most frequently checked, the results were:

1. Gentle	(N=904)	11. Non-Aggressive	(N=361)
2. Emotional	(N=901)	12. Passive	(N=221)
3. Neat	(N=707)	13. Sneaky	(N=192)
4. Active	(N=689)	14. Aggressive	(N=189)
5. Logical	(N=663)	15. Blunt	(N=182)
6. Tactful	(N=651)	16. Illogical	(N=164)
7. Independent	(N=578)	17. Not Ambitious	(N=79)
8. Ambitious	(N=540)	18. Sloppy	(N=59)
9. Dependant	(N=420)	19. Rough	(N=48)
10. Direct	(N=407)	20. Unemotional	(N=45)

The impressions and responses of the women are striking in that the top three characteristics chosen mirrored their opposites which ended up as the bottom three on the list. The top three are generally considered to be female character traits although, interestingly, five of the top ten were characteristics stereotypically listed as male. Far and away, the women who took the survey considered gentleness and emotion part of who a woman is (or should be).

For the next set of statements directed at discovering how these women came to know things (epistemology), the women were asked to say whether they agreed or disagreed. The first statement said, “Things are right or wrong; good or bad. Every question has only one right answer.” As a whole, the women overwhelmingly rejected this notion (84 percent), although women sixty-five years and over were not as convinced as the rest with only 64 percent disagreeing. Only 6 percent of those with graduate degrees agreed with the statement.

Another question aimed at an understanding of women’s epistemology was “All truth is absolute and the only way to know what is true is to locate and listen to the right teacher or authority figure.” Again, the women largely rejected this idea (77 percent). Once again, a majority of those women in the over sixty-five age group voted with the rest but not in overwhelming numbers with only 57 percent rejecting this view (almost

thirty percentage points behind the forty-six to fifty-four year old group). The older women who took the survey seemed much more open to the understanding that they need to find the right teacher who will provide for them the right answer to the great questions in life.

Almost a quarter of Christian women in this survey thought that truth was to be found from within. When asked to respond to the statement “I think truth is found primarily through my own experiences,” 24 percent *agreed*.³⁰⁵ The numbers were even higher in the nineteen to twenty-six year old range (35 percent) and agreement was higher still in the over sixty-five age range (50 percent).

The women were asked to check one epistemological statement that most closely described them. The survey revealed that few of the women surveyed would be categorized as women who learn in silence (2 percent) or who would be considered subjective knowers (4 percent). Sixty-four percent overall gave indication that they learn from a voice of integration.³⁰⁶

When the group was asked what their primary role in their church family was, 46 percent said that they were involved in a leadership role and that they considered that role an important one (80 percent). In a later question, almost a third of that older group of women said that they felt comfortable “when I listen to and follow the lead of knowledgeable authority figures.”

³⁰⁵This may not necessarily indicate that a high number of those taking the survey would be categorized as subjective knowers, (rejecting all knowledge that does not come from within). It all depends on how the women came about gaining “experience.” It appears from a subsequent question that only 4 percent of the women categorized themselves in this way.

³⁰⁶It is the epistemological position categorized by constructed knowledge.

The women were next asked to respond to the statement “I usually strive to subordinate my own wishes and actions to the desires of others.” Forty-two percent *agreed* with the statement.³⁰⁷ Again, the sixty-five and over group broke from the pack agreeing to the statement in significantly higher numbers (67 percent). The twenty-seven to thirty-five year old group *agreed* in 34 percent of their answers. The women taking this survey like predictability and clarity (84 percent) and have no fear that someone close to them will be penalized in some way if they excel at a task themselves (94 percent).

Conclusions from the Women’s Survey

What the survey revealed among other things is that evangelical women, when they come to God’s Word (in which they already have a high degree of confidence), do so to gain a better understanding of that truth and its application to the challenges of their lives.³⁰⁸ Preachers who include strong application along the way will likely be most effective in reaching the women in their audience. A large number of the women had doubts as to whether the main speaker of God’s truth to them (male preachers) really understood their unique life situations.³⁰⁹ Simple things like making extra efforts to

³⁰⁷More than four out of ten women said that they subordinate their own wishes to the desires of others while 44 percent indicated that they worried about their relationships with significant people in their lives. Still, almost 90 percent said that they had a strong sense of who they are as a person, independent of another. This may indicate that a high number of women are generally self-sacrificing, concerned about relationships but nonetheless, self-assured. It may also indicate that they are not as independent minded as the question (concerning their sense of who they are as a person) would indicate. Especially in light of the fact that almost six in ten said that they get depressed when there is conflict in close, personal relationships. It is possible that the question concerning their sense of self was one which *led* them to what they thought was the *right* answer, or, the answer which they desired to describe themselves.

³⁰⁸Most women indicated that for them, application does not extend to “role” education, although it does not entirely exclude it.

³⁰⁹Preachers need to know that a significant number of women in their audience, though trusting God’s Word, may be unconvinced that they are hearing it cleanly through a messenger that understands them. The question is whether this may leave an *out* in the minds of women who do not feel comfortable

include women in illustrative material, in use of personal pronouns, and by including women's unique concerns and point of view in teaching may go a long way to tearing down barriers to communication.³¹⁰ Women gravitate more to sermons about God's mercy, love and character over his judgment, but the faithful preacher must be mindful that all of the people need to hear all of the counsel of God.

In regards to women and depression, the women taking the survey expressed the fact that when they experience despair, it is most often when close personal relationships are under strain. Relationships were very important to these women (a high number had anxiety issues with those close to them) but so is maintaining integrity and following the rules. The preacher can encourage women in the audience to be mindful of maintaining their most important relationship from which all others flow: the relationship they have with Jesus Christ. He will never leave or disappoint them. Jesus Christ will never turn them away. A preacher who offers grace to those who often fail in following the rules can make a dramatic impact upon the lives of women.

The women in all age groups, incomes and educational backgrounds felt that there were real differences between men and women. They tended to agree that some qualities that have long been associated with women (gentleness and emotion) were generally true for all women although some other characteristics often associated with females (passivity) they strongly rejected as being true. A significant percentage of women do have real discomfort in regards to gender issues and their fitting in. Their candid responses to the Broverman listing revealed that they did not subscribe to all the

with certain aspects of biblical direction from the pulpit. This may account in some measure for the high number of Christian women who rely in their own experience for knowledge.

³¹⁰ A preacher's wife, or female leaders of the church, can become valuable, trusted assets in furthering the preacher's education as a communicator.

characteristics of what is often linked with being female but, nonetheless, may be influenced by them. Many of the women in their responses seemed to be saying that they knew what a woman was supposed to be, (and possibly what they feel *they* should be) but that they did not think that they themselves measured up to that standard. A preacher who can acknowledge a woman's unique make-up and differences from a man, while also recognizing a wide range of difference and giftedness among the category of women themselves, can help assuage cultural guilt and shame (whether that guilt originated in sacred or secular society).

Women completing the survey generally felt that they had control of their lives and had confidence in their worth and abilities. They strongly felt as if their identity was not dependent on another human being and generally felt supported by those close to them.

While the survey revealed that, when given clear options, a large majority (64 percent) categorized themselves as constructed knowers,³¹¹ many (36 percent) still learn by means which may hinder them from entering fully into a satisfying relationship with the living God. While it may be difficult to reach every woman through every sermon, the preacher that faithfully works from the text of scripture can be assured that the Holy Spirit is able to bring all women of all epistemologies to a deeper faith and spirituality.³¹²

The preacher must continually direct women outside of themselves to the only

³¹¹The constructed knower borrows from different ways of knowing, “. . . weaving together strands of both rational and emotional thought, integrating objective and subjective knowing.” Mathews, 87. Some women do not know that they can know anything (silence) while some know only what they have learned from an external authority (received knowers). Other women reject all external authorities (subjective knowers) or invest in learning by way of analysis through due process and procedures. Constructed knowers arrive at an altogether new way of knowing that sheds many of the restrictive parameters of the other ways of knowing. “Constructed knowers have the epistemological tools for deep spirituality.” Mathews, 103.

³¹²Isaiah 55:11 states “. . . so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” The Bible is both powerful (Romans 1:16, 17) and effective (Romans 10:17) in bringing about change.

trustworthy, stable and secure source of truth; the Bible, and to Jesus Christ, the only trustworthy object of their faith for salvation and daily living.

Again, though not a scientifically accurate reading of evangelical women in America, the results may be helpful to any preacher desiring to know better and to relate more effectively the sermon to the women in their audience.

The Focus Groups Results

The second part of this research program was a preaching series in which biblical women were central in the sermons. The participants were asked to listen to four sermons from the series, and then attend a focus group where they began by providing written answers to a six-question survey, which was followed by a round-table discussion of their answers. The five group discussions involved a total of thirty-two people.

The first question addressed to each panel was, “This series has been based largely on Biblical narrative (stories) in which a woman was the main character or personality in the story. If you are a woman do you relate and understand the biblical story better if the central figure is a woman? If you are a man, does this fact detract from your understanding of the story? Why?” Of the seventeen women interviewed, when asked the question, five clearly indicated that the fact that the main character was a woman *did* help them relate and understand the story and lesson better. Some spoke in very poignant language to that end. Seven of the seventeen thought it did help at certain points in the series,³¹³ while five flatly denied that it made any difference to them at all.

³¹³Of those women who thought that a female main character helped them relate either throughout the series or at some points in the series, a number cited specific women that we studied who they felt a kinship with. They spoke of having themselves experienced similar hardships or challenges in their own lives in the past or at the time of the presentation.

Of the five women who said in their short written responses that it made no difference whether the central figure was a man or a woman, *all* later gave indication during the oral interviews that indeed it actually did end up making a difference for them. That is, they could relate better and understand the text better because a woman was the central figure. One of the women interviewed, who very strongly communicated both in the short written answers and initially in her focus group that gender did not matter, later said of one of the central figures (the woman taken in adultery), “That was where I really slipped into her character.” Another of the five who said that the gender of the central figure absolutely had no bearing said in rating the series a nine³¹⁴ “. . . the real-life situations and the plausible emotional and thought-processes occurring made it easier for me to connect to the lessons they are imparting.”³¹⁵ Another of that same focus group who said that the sex of the main character did not matter and who rated the series a ten said, “I related to a lot of the situations, people, truths . . .”

One woman, who originally downplayed the role of gender in the impact of the sermons, later made a number of comments indicating that her own dual roles as mother and wife made it easier for her to understand the central figure’s plight. A large majority of the women participating expressed, at times in highly emotive language, their attachment to and understanding of the main characters in the story. They spoke of the personal nature of the series and how they related to certain characters and the challenges that they faced in their own lives. They talked of “feelings” and “empathy” and “understanding” and about the suffering and choices that these women found themselves

³¹⁴The final question was, “How would you rate this series of sermons as it relates to your life personally if one was ‘not very helpful or interesting’ and ten was ‘extremely helpful and interesting.’”

³¹⁵Please see the short written responses of group 1, question 6 in Appendix B.

immersed in. Many spoke of Abigail being their favorite. It was almost as if she (Abigail) gave them permission to act strongly in their own lives and to be proactive.³¹⁶ For some of the women, the entire series was a new experience. One said, “Coming mostly from a male-centered background, I am just beginning to feel comfortable with women as main characters.”³¹⁷

After careful analysis of the transcripts, it can be said that, although initially a number of the women’s response would not indicate it, preaching timeless truths through the eyes and lives of a woman did help *all of the women* who participated in the focus groups relate to its truths in a deeper and more meaningful way even if some were not fully aware of that fact at first.

Of the fifteen men who participated, when asked if the fact that a woman was occupying the main role of the narrative somehow detracted from their understanding of the story, thirteen clearly stated that even at the outset it did not detract nor was it distracting at all. They said that they were neither drawn to the central figure because it was a woman nor were they distracted by that fact. In every instance, at some point either in their response in the short written forms or in the focus group discussion, the

³¹⁶The classic “subjective knower” of all the women in the groups spoke in the most glowing terms of how much she had learned from all of these women. She spoke of them as a student would an instructor. For a number of the women, it was as if the main character of the narrative *was* the preacher; a preacher they could relate to and trust. A woman *speaking* to them through the scriptures helped them hear the message more clearly. Women trust God’s Word as truth but wonder if the main messenger can effectively help them apply it to their unique life situation but will listen when a woman speaks.

³¹⁷See the short written responses of group 2, question 1 in Appendix B.

men cited the general nature of the teaching which led to personal application no matter the gender of the central figure.³¹⁸

Although three of the men initially wondered, when the series was announced beforehand, how it could possibly relate to them, they later expressed appreciation for it as they began to apply general lessons from the sermons to themselves. One of the men, while stating that although he felt the lessons taught were of a general nature and could apply to either sex, also acknowledged the unique experience of these female central figures *as women* and felt that the application must have been at a deeper level for female listeners.³¹⁹

Overall the men interviewed did not find it difficult to listen to stories of women and were able to apply personally the lessons taught with little distraction. Some of the men admitted, that although they cared little if the central figure was a man or a woman, they believed that hearing biblical truths through the eyes and story of a woman actually helped them to understand the women in their own lives better and to be more sympathetic to them. At least one of the women saw that happen in her own marriage as a result of the series.³²⁰ Two of the men stated that they gravitated to the male figures in the narratives even though they were not the main focus.

³¹⁸This is what women usually have to do when listening to narrative passages where the male is the central figure. Women have had to convert the lessons in the scriptures to apply it to themselves all their lives but during the course of this series had less work to do since the central figure was a woman.

³¹⁹The focus groups moderator who also participated in writing short answers wrote, “. . . I must be honest in admitting that there are distinctly female experiences that I can try to be sensitive to, but must admit that they are foreign to my identifying fully or claiming to be able to understand with the same depth a woman could.” See the short written responses of group 5, question 1 in Appendix B.

³²⁰See the focus group transcripts of group 3, question 1 in Appendix C.

Three of the men spoke of their emotions being stirred by the series,³²¹ but just one time did a male participant in the focus groups cite a specific woman and her situation (Leah) as something that was personally meaningful to him. He commented that he could “see himself”³²² in her plight. A few noted that they could relate to *similar* challenges that the women had faced.

Overall, preachers who feel that they will lose their male audience when preaching a series on women, need not be concerned according to this sampling of men. On the whole, the men felt connected throughout the series and spoke of learning helpful biblical principles from the sermons, while the women often spoke in terms of being in the main characters’ shoes.³²³

When asked, “How did you feel about listening to a series of messages on women?” a few of the women indicated that they were not originally warm to the idea,³²⁴ while others said that they were indifferent. All seventeen of the women came around and reported a decidedly positive view of the series as it progressed. Several of the women did give strong indication that they were happy when they heard of the series on women since, as one put it, “Women are not looked at as being a strong part in the religion or in

³²¹One of the three mentioned that fact with just a passing reference.

³²²See the focus group transcripts of group 2, question 1 in Appendix C.

³²³Said one, “For me it made the understanding easier because I can see it from a woman’s point of view . . . it is easy to somehow imagine myself in her shoes.” (See group 5, question 1, Appendix C.) Another woman summed up the thinking of many when she said, “As a woman, I found this series to be very personal in nature and comforting to know that women of the Bible have experienced many of the hardships that women of today suffer.” See the short written responses of group 4, question 1 in Appendix B.

³²⁴One woman feared that the series would be biased “. . . because it’s a guy’s opinion of observing a women’s behavior.” See group 3, question 2, Appendix B.

the faith and I think that's wrong . . .”³²⁵ Another commented, “Where I am from and the church I used to go to, the only characters they used to talk about were men. Women, they only rarely brought up characters of women, and I thought it was very good [because] in the eyes of Christ we are both the same.”³²⁶ Another said, “I really enjoyed it. Abigail was my favorite. I love to hear about these ordinary women who were used by God to do incredible things. It inspires me. It also reminds me that women are just as important as men in history.”³²⁷ Said another woman: “Listening to people's life stories made it easier to apply or relate to a sermon either personally or through another's similar situation. [It was] more emotional.”³²⁸

A number of the men (although not all) approached the announcement of the series with some skepticism, though most received it well, seeing the lessons from these women as general in nature, ones that could be helpful to anyone of either sex. Many enjoyed the series because they were able to apply basic principles (and in some instances specific teachings) to their own lives in a different context, that being through the life of the central figure even though she was a woman. That fact seems to have even heightened the interest for the men. Many of the men were pleasantly surprised that they were able to do so, since many thought the series was going to be about women specifically in a way that would not relate to their life experience. At least two of the men gave indication that they were able to put themselves in the central character's place, a reverse of what

³²⁵See the focus group transcript of group 2, question 2 in Appendix C.

³²⁶Ibid.

³²⁷See the focus group transcript of group 2, question 2 in Appendix B.

³²⁸See the focus group transcript of group 2, question 3 in Appendix B.

women are usually called on to do often.³²⁹ They generally were intrigued by the choice of women studied.

On the whole, both men and women found these sermons, drawn from people's life stories, to be compelling and easier to relate to over against didactic or poetic passages of scripture. Although the sermons from this series were not delivered as first person narratives,³³⁰ they still seemed to draw the audience into the story in a similar manner with positive results for both men and women. Sixteen out of seventeen women expressed a preference of listening to sermons where the lessons were drawn from people's lives. Many of them spoke about how they could *feel* what the character felt and how it touched their weaknesses. One said, "With these stories it's like . . . especially when he gets into character sometimes and actually becomes the person . . . I mean, you really feel that, and you really feel what is going on. And you won't forget what you have felt in your bones."³³¹ Another woman in her short answers said, "I found it easier to be drawn into their stories and it was more quickly apparent how my situation in life could benefit from their experiences."³³²

³²⁹At a women's retreat she once attended, Alice Mathews tells the story of how the speaker read 2 Corinthians 5:17 but made one change. She said, "If anyone is in Christ, *she* is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." Mathews said that, even though she had quoted that verse many times in the past, on that day, for the first time, it felt truly personal in that she discovered *emotionally* that the verse included her. The preaching of biblical narratives, where a woman is the central character of the story, may emotionally include women in on the faith story on a level that male preachers do not understand fully. See Mathews, *Preaching That Speaks*, 161.

³³⁰Haddon and Torrey Robinson make a point of how the authors of many of the Old Testament books were accomplished storytellers as well as theologians who understood the power of stories. Robinson, *How You Tell It*, 12.

³³¹See the focus group transcript of group 5, question 3 in Appendix C.

³³²See the short written responses of group 1, question 3 in Appendix B.

Most of the men, likewise, stated a clear preference for sermons drawn directly from people's lives (although not in as large a percentage) and cited, more than any other reason, the ability of narrative preaching to help them relate better to the truths expressed than when hearing a didactic passage. This made it more "powerful." The men often talked of how preaching on narrative passages have an edge, since they have a tendency to, as one put it, "put legs on principles." One participant, a preacher himself, commented, "You read the account of a woman and she is actually living out this doctrine or heresy . . . whatever she's doing. Now, you have to make sense of a life. Where it is much easier (in preaching from the epistles) to make sense of this point, this point, and this point."³³³

Much of the emotive language that the women were drawn to and emotionally moved by came about as a result of "filling in" the story with some "color commentary." Most of the women appreciated when the preacher included this in the sermon.³³⁴ Women clearly prefer to observe God's revelation through the real life situations that biblical narrative brings, and most welcome a preacher relating the thoughts and motivations of the central figure and their reaction to their own situations and to that of present-day saints. The sentiment was that narrative preaching bridges the gap between doctrine and real life. It helped form a cognitive viaduct that sometimes they had difficulty traversing. The preacher who naturally gravitates to didactic passages of

³³³See the focus group transcript of group 2, question 3 in Appendix C.

³³⁴Three of the seventeen women found "fill-in" material mildly or very distracting while the rest found it very helpful. Five of the fifteen men interviewed found the same descriptive fill-in material to the text at least occasionally or very distracting, although a number felt that it aided in their understanding of the text. Of those who felt it was distracting, the prevalent reason was because it was not in the inspired text.

scripture needs to discover the impact narrative preaching seems to have (according to these results) on both men and women.

Each person was asked to rate the four sermons in the series “as it relates to your life personally if one was ‘not very helpful or interesting’ and ten was ‘extremely helpful and interesting.’” All of the women rated the series between eight and ten. Most were effusive in their praise of the series with nine of the seventeen women (53 percent) rating the series a ten. Among the women, the average score was 9.42. The men likewise gave the series of four sermons high grades although not as high as the women. The scores ranged from a low of three to a high of ten, the average score being 8.39. Three of the fifteen men (20 percent) gave the series a ten.

Conclusions from the Focus Groups

Although not clearly seen in the early feedback, the women who participated in the study gave clear indication that the fact that the main character of the narrative was a woman *did* in fact help them relate and understand the story and lesson better. Many of them spoke in language indicating that the series of messages became very personal in nature for them. This was true even of those women who initially said it had no bearing on the effectiveness of the series for them. The enthusiasm of the women who participated in the focus groups for the narrative style of the preaching in the women’s series of messages, and their estimate of its impact upon their lives, seemed to support the evidence of social scientists, psychologists and the scriptures that point to the highly relational nature of a large number of women.

The use of women as the main characters seemed to inspire and excite a number of the women to attempt to do great things for God, which several questions on the survey

seemed to reveal.³³⁵ Many of the women liked Abigail whom they saw as strong and proactive.³³⁶

By their own account, it was less work for them to “slip into character,” than in most other narrative passages making communication smoother and application easier and more deeply felt (applicable). Some made statements, which indicated that they felt valued and esteemed by even the attempt to bring the story of women of the Bible front and center. Clearly, this series, which highlighted the work of God through the life of a number of female Bible personalities, was an effective tool for personal change in the women who attended.

For the men, the fact that the main character was a woman, and they could not always empathize fully with her plight, did not seem to detract from the message in any meaningful way. They expressed the fact that they were able to glean general (as well as specific) application, even in those stories where the female character experienced life as only a woman can. A number expressed surprise that they, as men, learned valuable spiritual principles from this special-emphasis series. There was clear indication that a number were stretched spiritually.

The positive elements of preaching not only a single series with women as the main characters, but in highlighting women of the Bible and their contribution to the biblical story of faith, far outweigh any apparent negative effect feared by male preachers. Male

³³⁵Almost half of those responding to the survey had leadership roles in their local church and 80 percent thought those roles were important. Women want to make a difference. They like hearing of other women who did.

³³⁶Several of the women who were raised in other cultures expressed irritation or anger at the way in which women are treated back home, and were delighted with the proactive, imperfect, but godly examples of these women. The fact that some lesser-known biblical women were used added to the fascination with these women.

preachers must train themselves to include female characters in their sermons more often and to study those characters, not merely as supporting cast members but as central figures; whole human beings, essential to God's unfolding story of redemption and grace.

Conclusions from the Studies

The research methods used in this project were useful in revealing gender distinctions, and in helping guide the preacher in methods of presenting the sermon so that the Holy Spirit can more deeply engage the women in the congregation.

In their responses in the survey, the women expressed a need for preaching that is highly applicable to their struggles. They revealed the importance of relationship to them and expressed a high degree of both satisfaction and sorrow that they personally experience from their relationships. Many of the women considered themselves outside the range and standards of what a "normal" woman is, and trusted their own instincts as a main source of truth.

Perhaps the reason why the preaching series on women proved to be so effective was that it answered many of their concerns. According to them the series was highly applicable to their own lives. There was something in the messages each week that they felt they needed to institute in their own lives immediately. The series also dealt with women who seemed both in their nature and in their personal experiences to be outside the standardized mold. The women who sat in on the discussions of the focus groups were emotionally drawn to a number of the sermons' main characters. The fact that a woman, in a sense, was *bringing the message*, seemed to validate the truth being preached and their personal trust in it.

The purpose and intent of this thesis was to offer suggestions to male preachers on how they can more effectively relate the sermon to women as a segment of their audiences. The author determined that for that to happen, male preachers had to understand something of the physiological, psychological and epistemological differences between men and women, and how an understanding of those general differences impacts the way their female listeners may hear the sermon. The goal was to offer effective methods of exposition and presentation in order that women may better reflect the image of God, and his call upon each of their lives to bring him glory. It is the prayer of the author that in a minute way this thesis has contributed to that goal.

APPENDIX A
A WOMAN GOD CAN USE: THE WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH
DELIVERED AT THE WEST ESSEX BAPTIST CHURCH ON 5/16/04
I Kings 17

**To see God's faithfulness sometimes we need to step out and sometimes we need to sit back.*

Purpose: The listener should be convinced that we can trust God as faithful. They should decide to step out in faith in a single area where fear has kept them from moving ahead or they should decide to wait where their mistrust of God has caused them to have run ahead of Him.

Most teenagers think from time to time about a day in the future when they will go to college, maybe get married and even have children of their own. I know I did. I used to think about what my life would be like then; about some of the things I'd do with my children. I used to think about pitching a ball and ducking as my son would hit line drives towards my head. I thought about going for walks with my daughter along the shore. Lately, I went for a walk with my son along the shore and ducked as my daughter shot a line drive off her bat towards my head.

One of the things that I knew I would do was to engage in that age old rite of any parent: reading your children a *bedtime story*. Over the years, I have read hundreds of titles to all four of them. But whether it be the adventures of the *Berenstein Bears*, *Little Critters*, *Christopher Church Mouse*, or one of the thousand or so books from the *Walt Disney Collection*, I have never read a bedtime story to any of my children where, at the end, the main personalities were eaten by the dragon.

I have never read a single fairy-tale where the hero fails in his or her pursuit of whatever noble cause he, or she, or it might be pursuing. I have never once related a story to any of them where a significant relationship in the main character's life ended by violence or an accident (umm . . . with the painful exception of poor Bambi). They all end well. They all end with sweetness and light. They all . . . well, they all live happily ever after. Today's stories are a long way removed from the Brothers Grimm.

And you know what? I have observed some people whose lives seemed to roughly follow a similar plot line. I've spoken to couples who have had decades-long marriages that, by all appearances (and personal testimony) really were a bit of heaven on earth. Oh, they had seasons of challenge with teenage kids, an uncertain job market and the usual assortment of illnesses but basically, they lived a pretty fulfilling and happy life. The kind of life that the vast majority of humanity would kill for.

But, many more times than not my observations have led me to interact with lives that never even passed *near* the neighborhood with the storybook ending. Major struggles with failing bodies, misunderstandings at home and the constant battle with the world, the flesh and the devil makes a lot of people shutter when the alarm goes off in the

morning. For, like a heavyweight fighter, they once again are required to drag themselves off of their stool, put up their 8 ounce gloves and deflect the blows of a punishing opponent, while attempting to deliver a few good belts themselves, so they can make it into the next round.

Scarred, middle aged parents with large mortgages and daughters who are pushing for yet another body piercing. Seniors, who instead of living out the “golden years,” they have been told so much about, are struggling to hold their bodies and minds together while trying to stretch their meager pension until next month. Teens that are growing up in a world where the pressure to conform and the will to resist has never been so far apart. People who because of the disappointments of life, whether self-inflicted or not, feel very much alone to slay the dragons arrayed against them.

And I see it increasingly among women. There is a rapidly growing class of females who because of divorce, separation or the death of a spouse find themselves alone to face challenges that they had never anticipated. Women whose adolescent, storybook dreams have been shattered by the crushing realities of living in a dying environment. Adults who never thought that *their life* would come to this.

How many teenage girls do you think set as their goal in life to be a single mother when they grow up? Presently, unwed mothers head a quarter of all single-parent households in America. Divorced moms account for 46 percent of them, while marital separation (21 percent) and death of a spouse (7 percent) account for the rest. I can’t imagine any of them planning it that way when they were little girls jumping rope on the playground. I can’t. But there they are.

And I think that a lot of them would not easily admit it to you but, frankly, one emotion seems to always inexorably reel them in like a fisherman his catch: Fear. Fear of today, fear of tomorrow. Fear for themselves, double fear for their children. “*Where will we live? How will we live? What will happen to my kids if something happens to me?*” And for a woman of even moderate faith the question comes, “*And just where is God in this whole thing anyway?*” For an awful lot of people; for an awful lot of women, “happily ever after” seems like that proverbial carrot at the end of the stick which mocks the beast of burden who vainly pursues it.

If you have ever felt like that, you might be interested to hear of a woman in the Old Testament book of ***I Kings***, who we read about just a few moments ago. My guess is that more than a few of you here this morning would be able to empathize with her plight. She lived in tough times. She nearly died. Turn to her story in ***I Kings 17***, on page 345 in the pew Bibles in front of you.

The stories in the Bible, like the story of your own life, are surrounded by the events of nations and the decisions of individuals. The narrative in ***I Kings*** took place just fifty years after the great King Solomon died. You may remember that, under the leadership of David and Solomon, the nation of Israel grew and expanded and became rich and for a smaller nation, somewhat powerful. But then Solomon, listening to the voices of his

many pagan wives, turned towards other gods. As a result, the Lord God said that He would tear the kingdom from him. And tear He did. After Solomon's death Israel was split in two; the northern half retaining the name Israel and the lower, southern portion, now named Judah. The people in the north quickly left the worship of the one true God to worship the pagan gods from the nations that surrounded them.

Our story this morning is set in the northern kingdom of Israel where the land is torn by strife and instability. Of the six kings who had ruled in Israel from the time of Solomon, three of them had been murdered and all had plunged the nation deeper into sin and away from God. Ahab, along with his wicked wife Jezebel, now were in power in Israel. The biblical writer sums up God's view of their reign in ***I Kings 16:30***, **"Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him."** All of the previous six kings had done enormous evil. This guy outdid them all. Ahab and his wife actively led their nation into the worship of Baal and other gods.

Into this scene of growing chaos comes a prophet. He was to stand as one of the towering figures in all of the Old Testament. His name was Elijah, and he delivers a prophetic word to Ahab in ***17:1***, **"Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, 'As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.'"** God had had enough. One person said, *"If the people wanted to worship this Baal, who reportedly was the god of rain and water then let Baal provide the rains."*

I have heard it said, *"Be careful what you pray, for you just might get it."* That is exactly what happened to Elijah. As his nation was plunged deeper and deeper into idolatry by a weak king and his notoriously evil wife, he had the dubious joy of having a prayer against his own nation granted. A prayer originally offered in the hope that the people would be shaken from the evil that had settled upon the land.

And pray he did that there would be neither rain nor dew. By the time we pick up the story in ***I Kings 17:7***, the land had already been dry for well over a year. Young and old, people and livestock were all suffering in the midst of a deep drought and the famine that went with it.

Elijah, the prophet, was feeling the pinch of the results of his answered prayer, too. Our sense of justice tells us that good people should prosper and bad people should suffer, but it doesn't always work out that way. When a city is taken over by thugs, or when certain family members introduce grievous evil into a family situation, or when a nation is judged by God, often the righteous suffer right beside the wicked. Elijah suffered right along with the others because of evil King Ahab's choices. God's people are not immune to the suffering brought on by those who do evil.³³⁷ And Elijah was forced to flee.

³³⁷Mathews, *A Woman God Can Use*, 116.

He ended up in a ravine east of the Jordan River, and it was there that God took care of him in a most miraculous way. For, in that ravine, was a fresh brook where the prophet could drink from. That fact wasn't so miraculous but, what was remarkable was that bread and meat were delivered via air by specially prepared ravens each morning and evening. While people were beginning to starve, Elijah was trying to cut down on his carbs. After all, he had a prophetic image to maintain.

But, in time, even this idyllic situation fell prey to the deepening crisis. The brook which supported him began to dry up. And with each passing day, another rock would protrude above the water. Each passing week, the shoreline of that brook began to move a few more inches toward its center. And Elijah wondered what God would do. **Verses 8 and 9. "Then the word of the LORD came to him: 'Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food.'"** God told him to go to a Gentile woman who was part of a religious tradition that Elijah stood against; who lived in a suburb of the hometown of Jezebel, whose father was still very much in power. It was there, through this woman, that God would care for His prophet.

***Sometimes We Cannot See God's Faithfulness to Us
Until We Step Out in Faith Ourselves.***

She was a woman with no name. She was a woman known more for what she had lost than anything she had done. We know her as the widow of Zarephath.

In biblical times, the widow was classified with the fatherless and the sojourner as ones to be sincerely pitied. Because they were in a real sense helpless, God cursed anyone who perverted justice in dealing with them. **Deuteronomy 27:19** says, **"Cursed is the man who withholds justice from the alien, the fatherless or the widow."** Pity the child who had no father to teach him a trade. Pity the poor traveler who had neither family nor friend and was prey to the prejudices of the local clan who didn't like foreigners coming in with their strange ways and unfamiliar culture. But pity most the widow who now was on her own.

Although the ideal future for a widow was remarriage, sometimes that just didn't happen. And the seclusion in which oriental women lived made it difficult for a widow to find a livelihood, even if there were work for her to do. Today, there are investments and insurance policies and government help to ease a time of crisis, but not so then.

Perhaps her greatest challenge and the one that weighed heaviest on her heart was the fact that she was a single mother with apparently no extended family to help her care for her child. As someone said, *"If being a mother is a labor of love, then being a single mother requires double the labor and double the love."* And, I might add, double the effort. The life of the woman that Elijah came upon as he entered the city that day was by any measurable standards, difficult.

There is no question that the task of raising children presents a special kind of challenge for a single parent. Most of these women face the daily challenge of having too much month left at the end of the money. According to government statistics only half the mothers due child support get the full amount, while a quarter get none at all. That is part of the reason why 50 percent of single mothers and their children live in what is defined as poverty compared with 8 percent of families with a mom and dad who are married.

As high a hurdle that those challenges would present to any woman, when viewed against the backdrop of a national crisis of famine in the land, it would seem that this woman in this situation was an unlikely candidate to be a poster child for faith in the God of Israel.

The city of Zarephath would have been like all the other cities in the Palestine region, a city half dead from the effects of a year and a half without rain. The furnaces from which the city had once taken its name would not have been refining precious metals at anything approaching capacity for quite some time. But, when there is a famine, people don't think much about work. At least not as much as they do thinking about finding enough food to stay alive just one more day. That's what happens when famine begins to grip a land.

There is a gripping picture of a land in famine recorded in *II Kings chapter 6*. We read that Ben-Hadad, King of Aram, had mobilized his entire army and marched up and lay siege to Samaria. **“There was a great famine in the city; the siege lasted so long that a donkey’s head sold for eighty shekels of silver, and a quarter of a cab of seed pods, or a half a pound of doves dung, for five shekels” (v. 25).**

Yes, you heard right folks. We are talking about people doing things and eating things that a short time before would be unthinkable. It got so bad, that later in the chapter we read that two women with a dispute came to the king and one of them said, **“This woman said to me, ‘Give up your son so we may eat him today, and tomorrow we’ll eat my son. So we cooked my son and ate him. The next day I said to her, ‘Give up your son so we may eat him,’ but she had hidden him.’”** Cannibalism. We are talking about a disastrous situation. I’m not sure we can even imagine what it would be like.

To try and better understand what this town and what this woman was going through, I read some accounts this week of the Great Irish Potato Famine of 1846-50. I looked at photographs from the period. It was not a pleasant thing. I discovered that, when people begin to die of starvation, they just don't lay down and die one day. Before the time comes when they are finally put out of their misery, a host of major physiological and psychological changes have already occurred. Sleep becomes intermittent, stomach pains become a constant, unwelcome companion along with achy eyes and extreme hypersensitivity to light and noise. Often a constant tingling sensation is felt in both hands and feet. As the immune system weakens, the body finds it hard to fight off even

simple invading bacteria. You begin to lose your hair. You are constantly listless and weak. Walking becomes a chore.

Emotionally, one begins to deteriorate. Food occupies almost all your waking thoughts. Depression sets in. Irritability and frequent outbursts of anger become common. As you become more and more hopeless, a general weariness of life sets in. You begin to withdraw from contact with other people. The population of Zarephath, along with its neighboring towns, was dying. They teetered on the brink of catastrophe.

This was the situation and here was the woman Elijah met as he approached the city that day. She was low in spirits and gaunt in form with clothes hanging limply around her rapidly thinning body. **Verse 10** rounds out her piteous condition as we see her scrounging for a few sticks in the dust to make one last meal-time fire.

As he slowly moved toward her, she would have been startled to see a man who did not have the look of one malnourished but one who . . . well, was rather fit and trim. Roughly clad in a garment of coarse camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, she would have noticed immediately that this was no ordinary man. This was a prophet of the God of Israel. A God that she had only heard rumors about.

He spoke to her at the end of his 100 mile trek through the wilderness in **verse 10**. Anyone hearing this stranger's request of her that day would have thought him cruel, or at least insensitive. **"Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?" As she was going to get it, he called, 'And bring me, please, a piece of bread.'"**

Perhaps Elijah was testing to see if this woman was the one God had directed him to. If that was the case, her answer would have seemed to put that notion to rest. She turned and said to him in **verse 12**, **"As surely as the LORD your God lives, I don't have any bread - only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it - and die."** She obviously was not the one.

But sometimes, when all logic tells you one thing, God's Spirit inside tells you something else. He told Elijah something else. **Verses 13 and 14**, **"Elijah said to her, 'Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD gives rain on the land.'"**

He asked her to take what amounted to a monumental step of faith. To willingly give him a portion of her final, meager meal. Provisions that might keep her and her little one alive for a few more hours. If ever there were a test of faith, this was it. In the next moment she would have to decide whether she would trust the words of Israel's God as spoken through this stranger or consider him a fool and ignore his words.

She decides to trust the words of the stranger and in *verse 15* follows his instructions. I find her actions quite extraordinary. Would anyone have faulted this woman if she had turned to the stranger and said, “*You must be kidding? Why would I do that? Forget the ancient Near Eastern tradition of hospitality; we’re talking about my son. What right do you have to come in here and even request such a thing? I don’t even know you or your God.*” But she didn’t do that, and my question is, why? Why did she listen to his words?

Perhaps she said to herself, “*Hey, what’s the difference. I know the situation. There is no hope; we’re both going to die. Why not go out with a modicum of dignity and show a little generosity on our way out?*” That type of thinking would have been generous and quite logical.

Maybe, recognizing his garments as those of a prophet’s, she said, “*Hey, he’s a religious guy. Maybe he has an “in” with his God. Certainly our gods haven’t heard our cries. Maybe his will.*” That type of thinking would have been self-serving, but once again basically understandable.

Or maybe, seeing the conviction in his eyes, she somehow grabbed onto the tailpipe of faith rumbling through town that day and just believed. Alice Matthews in her book, *A Woman God Can Use*, said, “*Sometimes when we have no faith of our own, someone else’s faith can become contagious enough to infect us as well.*”³³⁸ I think she’s right. I’ve experienced it myself. When faced with a situation that I would normally shrink from, someone has stood up and said, “*Hey, God can do this thing. We can’t but He can.*” And I believed.

There was no logical reason for David to believe that he could go up against Goliath. But he did, and God was faithful. His actions rallied the armies of God and infused them with faith that God was still there. As Gideon stood with his faithful 300 men readying to attack an enemy of tens of thousands, he told them, “*You watch me, you follow my lead. . . God is going to do something wonderful this night.*” And He did. God was faithful and gave them an improbably victory.

How many times was I infected with the faith of another as I sat in self-pity and defeat because the circumstances of life had come crashing down upon me, and someone gave me a promise from God over the phone or in a written note, and their faith for my situation stirred up the morsels of conviction that were still in there? And, it’s happened to you too, hasn’t it? Maybe it’s happened in this auditorium. And, because of the faith of another, we have hope, and we stand up, and we trust God.

Listen to me. This woman had heard of the God over the border that was said to do miracles and she took a step. It may have been a step like that of a toddler whose parent with encouraging words and arms gently wrapped around her waist urged her on, but *it was a step*. The fact of the matter is that sometimes God calls us to take a step, a real

³³⁸Ibid., 118.

definable step of faith when our backs are up against the wall and we are out of answers. He asks us to take a step of faith when doing so seems - just seems - this side of lunacy. When taking that step seems to be taking us in the opposite direction of self-preservation and protection.

Go talk to any missionary ministering in Muslim nations today. Yesterday, in our library, I was looking at a tape from Peter and Pam VanDerDecker who, along with their brood, left everything and traveled to a place who wanted and needed “*God talk*.” Nowhere near hospitals and planes to hop on if something goes wrong. But God has done a mighty miracle there in Papua New Guinea. Scores are being saved for eternity, and God has provided mightily for them.

Sometimes God asks men and women who are needy themselves and who are only all too convinced of their lack to give to another though in the giving they know they are insuring that they will only make their own situation worse. But, when they obey, God is pleased. And, He provides.

“She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah.”

But, can you imagine . . . can you just think if this woman resisted and kept that extra morsel for herself?³³⁹ She would not only have consigned herself and her child to death but her story would have been buried centuries ago by the sands of time. Sometimes, we can't see God's faithfulness to us until we step out in faith ourselves.

***Sometimes We Cannot See God's Faithfulness to Us
Until We Sit Back in Faith.***

What a great story. If someone from Hollywood ever purchases the rights to make it into a movie, I suspect it is here that the credits will role. But then something happened. **“Some time later the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing. She said to Elijah, ‘What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?’”**

In the first test, God brought before this woman a situation in which she could act. She could step out in faith and offer her last morsels of food believing the prophet and his God. But, with this, I mean . . . what could she do?

It is perhaps the most helpless situation of all. To see devastating events unfold before your eyes that you know will impact your life and your future forever. And, all the while, knowing that there is nothing that you can do to stop them. Often the great accuser comes in times like this and convinces us that the trial is a direct result of past sin

³³⁹Ibid.

in our lives. When the heat of adversity is the hottest, it is then that Satan tries to connect the dots of tribulation to past and present sin and guilt. *“This is connected to my past indiscretion, my cheating on the exam, my bad mothering, my poor relationship with my dad, my bitter heart toward my boss. These things have happened not to grow me but are a result of my sin. And, now there is nothing that I can do.”*

If we are convinced that the suffering we are experiencing or the pain others I love are feeling is a result of *my* past indiscretion . . . it can be more than we can bear. It will result in heartache upon sorrow.

But, God is not like us. He is not vindictive and looking about for his pound of flesh. The death of her son and Elijah’s presence with her perhaps stirred the awareness of sin within her, true, but his death was not punishment from God. This test instead was to see if she would trust Him when there was nothing that she could do to change the situation. The difference in this test, and the one she had already come through, was the fact that in the first one God wanted her to act. To step out in faith when it seemed to go against all rational thought and to see Him work. But, with this . . . I mean what could she do? She was absolutely helpless.

When we are tested, God is working to make us strong, to expand our faith, to see Him work. They are meant to awaken that sense of God’s love towards us. She did not understand that yet. All she could see was her loss.

So, someone else stepped in to show her that part of the equation. **“‘Give me your son,’ Elijah replied. He took him from her arms, carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his bed. Then he cried out to the LORD, ‘O LORD my God, have you brought tragedy also upon this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die?’ Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried to the LORD, ‘O LORD my God, let this boy’s life return to him!’ The LORD heard Elijah’s cry, and the boy’s life returned to him, and he lived. Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave him to his mother and said, ‘Look, your son is alive!’” (1 Kings 17:19-23).**

Sometimes we cannot see God’s faithfulness to us until we step out in faith ourselves; until we do the deed that proves faith. But, at other times, we will not see God’s faithfulness to us until we are in a position where we must sit back in faith. We must sit back because there is nothing we can do.³⁴⁰

God put this woman in a position where she could do nothing. And, there are times when He does the same to us. Those who we love are suffering and going through a terrible time, maybe because of foolish choices. You yell, scream, withhold funds, lay on guilt, but nothing good comes. And, you are left in a position where you have to say, *“Lord, there is nothing I can do. If something is to be done, if the future is to be saved, than you will have to do the saving.”*

³⁴⁰Ibid., 123.

It is interesting to see this woman's progression of faith isn't it? In *verse 12* she refers to Elijah's God as she would any other of the surrounding gods calling him, **"...the Lord your God."** In *verse 18* she came to put together that his God had something to do with her life and her sin and her need. Her trials awakened in her the need for forgiveness, her need for someone to step in and do something; to help her in her miserable condition. And, God provided someone. He provided Elijah, a man of God, to show her God's love. He's provided Jesus Christ the Son of God to show you His love.

Look at where she ends in *verse 24*. **"Then the woman said to Elijah, 'Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth.'"** The woman's experience resulted in her conversion or at least a confirmation of her faith. In both tests, the woman was brought to a clearer understanding of God's goodness. "Only a woman who comes to know that God sustains, controls, guides, and is omnipotent can be the center of a miracle of healing and of abundance."

If she had never been tested, she would have never reached this point. She would have forever remained guarded, lacking any real faith. She would have never known that there is a God who loves her through whatever life threw at her. This woman is mentioned just one more time in scripture. She is mentioned by Jesus Christ in *Luke 4*. He uses her to an unbelieving generation as an example of faith. Faith that steps out. Faith that waits.

God proves Himself faithful as we trust Him at different times in different ways. To see God's faithfulness, sometimes we need to step out and sometimes we need to sit back. If we ask, He will give us the wisdom to know what to do.

A WOMAN GOD CAN USE: ABIGAIL
 DELIVERED AT THE WEST ESSEX BAPTIST CHURCH ON 5/23/04
I Samuel 25

**The damage done by a fool can be stemmed by the wise acts of a godly woman.*

Purpose: The women, (especially) in the audience should know that they bear a responsibility to act in a wise manner when faced with the prospect that both they and those around them are about to suffer great loss because of foolish decisions and determine to step out in faith to protect them.

I wonder if you have ever sat in church and watched the couple in front of you, or stood on line at Home Depot, or walked past a neighbor's house as they were out doing yard work and lamented the fact that by all observable evidence they, unlike you and yours, seemed to have it all together? The husband and wife seem to get along well; the kids have a minimum of body piercings and the dog listens when they call. Things seem....well, good. All in all, it's a pretty sickening picture when you consider the blow out the members of your clan endured the night before. Again. And you find yourself saying things like, "*I wish I was her. I wish my husband showed an ounce of the consideration he shows her.*" Or, "*I wish Mr. and Mrs. Brown were my parents. Life would sure be easier.*"

Have you ever found yourself saying something like that? Having been in ministry for a number of years now, and in a position to share deeply in the lives of many of you; there's one thing I have found to be true and that is, that often things are not as they seem. They are not always what they appear to be.

Alice Mathews in her book which *coincidentally* is entitled *A Woman God Can Use*³⁴¹ (well, maybe not so coincidentally), tells the story of how a few years ago she was speaking in a women's conference in a South-central state. She remarked that the women at the conference all seemed to be prim and proper and altogether perfect. She just had a question whether any of them were real. The Saturday evening of the conference she found out. Several women approached her and told her their stories of their home lives which reinforced the fact that things are not always what they appear to be.

One woman, whom she called Jane, was clearly scared when she came to her. She had been married for 13 years. Her husband was a seminary graduate who had pastored several churches along the way but by then was trying to make it in real estate. She had three school age children and worked full-time as a nurse. *No one in that church or at her work place would have ever guessed that Jane was a battered wife.* And, she had been since the first year of her marriage. Her husband Jack would burst out in fits of rage over little things like if he caught her reading a book. He insisted that, if she wanted to learn something, she should ask him. Or, it may have been over the fact that someone in

³⁴¹Mathews, *A Woman God Can Use*, 96, 97.

the family had not memorized the prescribed Bible verse for the day, or that he saw her talking to another man, or something else.

He would hit her and pull her hair, and throw anything that he could get his hands on at her and then storm away. She would lay awake at night knowing that, when he returned, she might get it again or she might get a bucket of cold water dumped on her. Or, maybe nothing would happen and the storm would have passed for a time. She just never knew. Once, when she was pregnant, Jack went into a rage over something in the car. He reached over, opened her door and pushed her out of the moving vehicle. It was always the same after one of these outbursts. Jack would be contrite and sorrowful and promise never to let anything like that happen again. In public, he hugged his Jane and told people to *“look at my beautiful wife.”*

Finally, Jane got Jack to go to counseling with her, but the Christian counselor lectured her on her responsibility to be submissive to her husband. The only reason that she had come up to Alice to talk about her situation now was that she was beginning to genuinely fear for her children.

The really tragic part of this woman’s story was that she had become convinced, through the teaching in her church, that her duty was to stay there and suffer in silence. And worse than that, Jane began to believe that, in some sick way, she bore a large part of the responsibility for the way her husband abused her. He had always insisted that if she was different, he would not beat her.

I would like to say that Jane and Jack’s story is the rarest of examples, but it is not all that rare at all. One out of eight women in our country are physically abused. According to a March of Dimes’ study, 12 percent of pregnant women are battered by male partners. One article in the Santa Cruz Sentinel last week citing a report by the U.S Surgeon General, said that being battered by men is the number one *“health problem”* of American women. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that one million women seek medical assistance for male-inflicted injuries every year. And folks we know that most cases of domestic violence go unreported. We know that.

But, abuse takes other forms as well. I knew a wife who could never prepare a meal without receiving criticism. Her figure was not good enough; her house was not clean enough and, because of her many perceived shortcomings, would be punished by her husband in subtle ways. Once when her car broke down, he decided to leave it broken, parked idly in the driveway for an entire winter stranding his wife at home with two little ones to care for. Things like that. Real mental abuse.

And, the thing is the abused, though they may suffer physical welts and emotional baggage, are not the only ones who suffer. The abuser hurts himself or herself too. Yeah, it’s true. The percentage of women who batter their husbands has been soaring for a number of years now. These individuals think that they can bully people to get their way. And, they think it because it has always worked in the past. They are never called on to exhibit self-restraint. But, somewhere along the line, they are held accountable for

their abuses and they lose a job, or their family, or their freedom. In fact, the web of victims that abusive behavior spawns is much wider than you would ever know at first glance. Think of it for a second. Anyone really, who is dependant upon or has a relationship with an abuser or one being abused is dealing with a shell of the kind of person they could be. Their sin has diminished them. They are a shell of the person that the outside world thinks that they are.

Do you know what the Bible calls someone who brings grief to their families and themselves by wicked behavior? Someone who doesn't know how good they really have it? Someone who despises words of wisdom? Someone who never listens to anyone's advice? Do you know what the book of Proverbs almost a hundred times, calls someone like that? It calls them a fool. Abusers of any stripe are fools.

So how do you handle a fool? What do you do with them? What should be the Christian man and even more so the Christian woman's response to someone in their lives who could be characterized as a fool?

In *I Samuel 25*, we see a case history of a fool and a wise woman's response to him. Turn there with me this morning. It's on page 286 in the pew Bibles.

***The Words and Actions of a Fool
Hurt Themselves and Others.***

But, before we get into the chapter and the story itself, we need to back up just a bit to place this story into its proper setting. It was in the days when Israel was beginning to chafe under the uneven leadership of Saul, its first king, that David the shepherd was anointed as the heir to the throne by the prophet Samuel. Though designated king, his actual ascension would not come for quite some time; in fact, not until years later. David in this chapter was still waiting for the reality of that event to come true.

And, instead of being honed and readied for the enormous task of leadership that lay ahead, he is running with hat in hand seemingly two steps and a cup of coffee in front of Saul, whose jealousy of God's chosen king had driven him to hunt David down to kill him.

The first few verses of *chapter 25* introduce to us the main characters and let us in on some of the stuff going on that would be missed by the casual observer. *Verses 2 & 3* tell us that there lived a man named Nabal who was very wealthy in livestock and land. If he was alive today, he would own four car dealerships and live on one of those hidden streets in Essex Fells where, if you park your car on the side of the road, within 10 minutes you will be met by a friendly police officer asking you what your business in the area is.

We are also introduced to a woman named Abigail. She is rich too by virtue of her marriage. I don't know if she married this man (who was probably a bit older than her) for his money or not. It's possible. But, knowing that marriages were arranged by the

family and knowing something of this woman's character, I tend to think that Nabal's wealth may have been more of a lure for her dad than for her. Her father very well may have factored Abigail's feelings into any consideration of the marriage; but, even if they were, they would have been of secondary importance.

She is described in *verse 3* as a **“beautiful woman.”** Her appearance was a plus in that society. Can you imagine living in a society where such a strong emphasis was placed on how you look? I'm glad we've evolved past that!

But, the text also tells us that **“she was . . . intelligent.”** The word is *Sekel* – (*say' kel*) in the Hebrew. This word does not mean that she took all Advanced Placement courses in high school. It means that she was wise in the living of life. She was capable, prudent, insightful and showed discretion. When you meet a woman like this, you just know it. You could put her in charge of something and you know it will get done with a high degree of competency and in a fashion that everyone will be happy with. She was both beautiful and intelligent.

But, she did have one, great, dark cloud in her life.... and it was her husband, Nabal. The name Nabal literally means, *“Fool.”* In *verse 25* in a conversation with David later in the story, Abigail states what he was plainly, in case there was any question.

Now, I don't know if Nabal was his birth name. It would seem a rather cruel thing for any parent to name their son, *Fool*. It would be like meeting the new neighbor next door when suddenly he calls his son over and says, *“Hey, I want you to meet my son, Stupid. Stupid come on over here and meet our new neighbors.”* So, I suspect that maybe the name given here in this chapter was not a birth name but a name, that was tagged on him and spoken in whispers because of how he lived his life.

Verse 3 tells us that, **“He was a Calebite, [and] was surly and mean in his dealings.”** That word “surly” -*qasheh* (kaw-sheh) in the Hebrew - as used in scripture can mean *“stiff-necked or obstinate; severe, hard, rough, cruel, stubborn.”* He may have been rich; he may have known how to make money; but he was impossible to live with and a fool in the important things of life. A fool is not necessarily stupid, he just doesn't recognize the obvious.

Judging from his stinginess that we see a few verses down, he was a man who valued money above most other things. The Bible says that a wise man will be satisfied with the wealth God allows him to have. He will invest his wealth; he will use it as a tool to accumulate better things on ahead. But, the fool spends all his money on today. Sometimes he erects a building at the local university to extend his name just a little beyond his death. But in the end, it will all burn and the fool will be left with nothing. But, a fool can't see that.

Nabal, *“Fool,”* was also an ungrateful man. It is another characteristic of a fool. The chapter tells us that Nabal was sheering his sheep and David heard about it. Now sheep sheering may not sound like a big deal to us, but it was a joyous and festive

time in that day. It could be compared to the day the farmer gathers all the harvest onto the trucks to bring to the market. It could be compared to receiving a diploma after years of preparation and study. It's party time, baby. There would always be a feast at that time provided by the owner of the sheep and, at that feast, he would reward everyone who helped make the day possible.

One of the guys who made the day possible for Nabal was David. It was not uncommon for thieves and roving groups of bandits to attack a herd and carry off what they wanted. Buying enough people to protect the herd would cut deeply into profits. David and his six hundred band of merry men were near those very fields. If they had wanted, they could have taken Nabals' thousand goats and three thousand sheep and there would not have been a thing that Nabal could have done about it. But, *verse 7* tells us that when Nabal's shepherds were grazing the flocks nearby, David's men didn't do that. They did not mistreat them. They did not steal from them. In fact, their very presence acted as a deterrent from anyone who would.

So, David sends ten men to bring his greetings to Nabal and to politely ask for a small token of gratitude. This was not David demanding protection money but a common courtesy of the day. But, Nabal the Fool isn't interested in common courtesies, and instead, David's men, like everyone else he owed, were given the back of his hand. **"Nabal answered David's servants, 'Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days. Why should I take my bread and water, and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men coming from who knows where?'" (1 Samuel 25:10, 11).**

He did not recognize the benefit of having David's servants surround and protect him. Besides that, he insulted David by calling him a slave. One of the characteristics of a fool is that they cannot recognize when someone has been good to them. They are ungrateful people. They don't think they owe anyone anything.

There is a connection between ingratitude and foolishness. *Romans 1:21, 22* documents that fact. Paul writes, **"For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools..."**

Usually, a person who puts primary value on secondary things is incapable of heartfelt gratefulness. The reason is they are blind to the truly good things done for them and given to them. Their thinking becomes crooked like that of a fool. And everybody knows that a fool is difficult to reason with. In fact, a servant in *verse 17* says of Nabal, **"He is such a wicked man that no one can talk to him."** One just seems to follow the other so often. God had labeled him obstinate in *verse 3*. A servant seconded the motion in *verse 17* and in *verse 25* his own wife, who knew him best, made it unanimous. **"Do not speak to a fool,"** says *Proverbs 23:9*, **"...for he will scorn the wisdom of your words."** No, there's just no talking to a fool.

One more thing about Nabal the Fool is that he was unaware of pending judgment. When David hears of the negative reply of Nabal he is furious and his reaction is swift. **Verse 13, “David said to his men, ‘Put on your swords....’”** Judgment’s a comin.’ Nabal is totally unaware of the consequences of his folly. Instead of preparing for judgment, he throws himself a feast and glories in his own self-deception, thinking that judgment is just a figment of someone’s wild imaginings. A fool is not necessarily stupid, he just doesn’t recognize the obvious.

And now because of this wicked, foolish man’s words and action, not only he, but all of his clan, were going to feel the hot judgment of sharp metal piercing their bodies. It is often what happens when a fool is left unchecked to continue on his foolish ways. He not only brings his own life down to the pit, but he pulls others down with him.

What could this woman who was married to this man who had wrong priorities, an ungrateful heart, a spirit that shut all reasonable talk out, and who lived as though he would never have to answer for any of his destructive choices, do? What could she do so that others would not be destroyed by his foolish choices? What can a person who is linked with a fool really do? What did Abigail do?

Something can be done. We don’t have to live at the mercy of a fool. The damage done by a fool can be stemmed by the wise acts of a godly woman.

***The Measures Taken by a Wise Woman Can
Often Lessen the Hurtful Effects of a Fool’s Actions.***

Abigail had to act quickly; after all, 400 armed men with revenge on their minds were, at that moment, riding fast and furious right toward her camp. She first tried to limit the damage done by her husband’s foolish choices. Look at **verse 18-23**.

“Abigail lost no time. She took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five dressed sheep, five seahs of roasted grain, a hundred cakes of raisins and two hundred cakes of pressed figs, and loaded them on donkeys. Then she told her servants, ‘Go on ahead; I’ll follow you.’ But she did not tell her husband Nabal. As she came riding her donkey into a mountain ravine, there were David and his men descending toward her, and she met them. David had just said, ‘It’s been useless - all my watching over this fellow’s property in the desert so that nothing of his was missing. He has paid me back evil for good. May God deal with David, be it ever so severely, if by morning I leave alive one male of all who belong to him!’ When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and bowed down before David with her face to the ground.” She then in verses 24-31 proceeds in a self-effacing manner to beg forgiveness and mercy of David for her husband’s foolishness.

And I ask you, as a Christian woman, do you think she did the right thing? Alice Mathews makes two points about her actions at this point. First, I mean let's face it, she did exactly the opposite of what her husband wanted her to do. While we can't be one hundred percent sure that's true, we can reasonably surmise that since, second, she did it it says, behind his back. **Verse 19** says, **"...she did not tell her husband, Nabal."**

I look at this whole scene and I say to myself, *"What is this an episode of I Love Lucy?"* She's scheming behind her husband's back and pretty soon he'll be taping his foot with his arms folded across his chest saying, *"Abeegail, you got a lot of splainin' to do."* I mean she was doing things that I have often counseled wives *not* to do. Don't get into a situation where you are doing things behind your husband's back, and all things being equal, don't deliberately disrespect him by disregarding his words.

But was she right? David thought she was. And David thought that God would think the same. **Verse 32-35**, **"David said to Abigail, 'Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands. Otherwise, as surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, who has kept me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak.' Then David accepted from her hand what she had brought him and said, 'Go home in peace. I have heard your words and granted your request.'"**

David saw everything she did as from the Lord. Her actions saved the lives of many, including the life of her husband. In fact, he would have been the first one to go, right? She did not have to do what she did. She could have gathered a few people and possessions and ran in the opposite direction. That decision certainly would have solved her marriage difficulties in a single afternoon. She could have confronted David and said, *"Look this guy is a jerk, go ahead after him but please don't harm the others."* But what she did was lay her own life on the line for someone who didn't appreciate her and didn't deserve her. She did what she could to minimize the damage done by a fool.

But what about submission? What is submission? The best definition of the attitude of submission is found in **Philippians 2:1-8** which says, **"If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in**

appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!” He did what He could not have wanted to do for my benefit. To save me. On the cross, He was thinking of me.

God has established authority and where there is authority, there is submission and, where there is submission, the subordinating of our own personal interests at the prompting of another, there is obedience to God. When we obey God’s delegated authorities in our lives, whether that authority be government officials, church leaders or family members, we obey God. But, sometimes true submission takes on a different look, an added dimension from what you would normally expect.

Submission is not a passive act but an active one. Abigail does not act in a way that promotes her own interests. She would be far better off to act like the perfect wife by doing exactly what Nabal wants. In *verse 24*, she says, “**. . . My lord, let the blame be on me alone.**” Abigail is truly submissive in that she actively seeks to save her husband (and all the other males in her household). In seeking to save them, she puts her own life on the line.

She goes out, alone, to encounter a man who is willing and able to kill her entire household. When she encounters David, she asks that his full anger be spent on her, on her *alone*. She is submissive in that she acts in a way that will benefit her husband and everyone else in her household, yet at her expense. Doing nothing (and thus appearing to be submissive) will further her interests at her husband’s expense.

There are times when we seek to console ourselves for “caving in” to what is wrong by calling it submission. Someone is destroying the family, they are once again wreaking havoc on all those around them and we say, “*Well, they are the authority here. God calls me to submit.*” You will not find solace in the scriptures by excusing yourself and going along with the acts of an obvious abuser under the banner of submission.

There are times when we must act contrary to the wishes of the one to whom we are in submission. This can only be in matters where God’s will is clearly contradictory to the will and wishes of those to whom God has called us to submit. This can only be when we act in a way that is costly to us, but is truly beneficial to the other. Submission sometimes means trying to actively limit the damage caused by someone’s foolish choices. Sometimes, the damage done by a fool can be stemmed by the wise acts of a godly woman.³⁴²

Abigail doesn’t destroy our definition of submission; she, by her selfless acts, expands it. But be careful. Like anything else, we can use this as a pretext to get anything we want and do anything we want. Don’t use this woman’s example as an excuse for sin.

³⁴²Ibid., 104.

Now, the text tells us she did one more thing. She went home and confronted her husband so that he might not commit such a foolish act again. Most times a fool just doesn't see the consequences of his actions. We must go the final step and confront them to let them know that the consequences of continued foolish behavior can be serious. Abigail confronted David on his way to do something that would have been a very destructive thing for his own future (**vs. 31**). But now she goes home and confronts the source of the foolishness. Although she took a great risk in doing so, she had to let him know what the consequences of his destructive behavior almost led to and surely will lead to again.

Verse 36, “When Abigail went to Nabal, he was in the house holding a banquet like that of a king. He was in high spirits and very drunk. So she told him nothing until daybreak. Then in the morning, when Nabal was sober, his wife told him all these things, and his heart failed him and he became like a stone.”

I don't know why he keeled over. I assume that it was either from the shock of what almost happened or in an apoplectic fit of anger at his wife. I do know that he literally had a stroke. God judged him and, ten days later, he was dead.

Many women find this last act hard to do. To take the next step and put aside the thoughts that they brought this abusive behavior about; being able to overcome their fears that they will only be making a bad situation worse; overcoming unscriptural definitions of submission. They find it very hard to do.

And, I guess the one thing that they need to remember, the one thing that they must keep clearly in their mind, is that the damage done by a fool can be stemmed by the wise acts of a godly woman. Sometimes by timely, Spirit-led action, destructive consequences that would have resulted by yet another foolish choice can be headed off. The damage done by a fool can be stemmed by the wise acts of a godly woman. Sometimes, fools turn around.

Remember the story at the beginning that I told from Alice Mathews of Jane and Jack? Well, she corresponded with Jane for months always sending the letters in care of her work address. Then one day came another one with her home address right there in the upper left hand corner. It read:

In June and July, Jack's behavior or attitude became more hateful and oppressive. More frequently, he involved the children, sometimes blaming them for his outbursts. He threw a glass at the kitchen sink with such force that the glass shattered all over the kitchen, the counters, floor, etc. Then Jack wanted Mickey, our twelve-year-old to pick it up. I refused to let Mickey clean up Jack's mess, so it stayed that way for two days. Sherry, age 11, had been away. She walked in and asked, “Was this an accident or did Dad get mad?” She was told the truth. Stanley, age 9, began getting hysterical every time Jack raised his voice, and that would make Jack more mad.

The letter continued.

In the middle of July, I involved another party, Chuck and Margaret....Without Jack knowing about it, I took an afternoon off and talked with them. Margaret and I had already been talking some. Chuck is an attorney and well respected by Jack in every way. As you would expect, Jack hit the roof when I told him. He started with the same accusations of betrayal all over again. I thank God for the courage to have spoken again.

Chuck, Margaret, Jack and I meet about once a week for 2-3 hours. The first session was the worst, but Alice, the last six weeks have been wonderful. Chuck confronts issues and Jack has not resisted the accountability. Through tears, and pain, and sorrow he has committed himself to me different from ever before. He has faced the issue as sin and as totally unacceptable. He is genuinely striving for a holy walk . . . Once more I have hope . . . Please continue to share with other women the need for openness and for friends, that life does not have to be endured, but can be lived and even enjoyed. I look forward to see what God has tomorrow for me. Please feel free to share my life with others if it would help.

Sometimes women, sometimes men must bear the responsibility to act in a wise manner when faced with the prospect that both they and those around them are about to suffer great loss because of foolish decisions and determine to step out in faith to protect them. And, if you do, you need to know that you have not failed as a Christian, or a woman, or a wife. You need to know that when you step out in faith, at potential risk to yourself, you are being submissive to God who will give you the courage to do what you must to protect all touched by the actions of a fool. It's not an easy thing. But know this: The damage done by a fool can be stemmed by the wise acts of a godly woman.

Be a godly woman. Be a godly man. Help those whose own blind acts will bring destruction, to themselves and to others. You can do it with His help.

A WOMAN GOD CAN USE: LEAH
 DELIVERED AT THE WEST ESSEX BAPTIST CHURCH ON 5/30/04
Genesis 29

**We can find joy in a love-lacking marriage by changing our focus from what we do not have to what we do have.*

Purpose: The listener caught in a loveless marriage will identify good things in their lives on which to publicly thank God for and find joy in.

You've all heard that experience is the best teacher. Sometimes, when nothing else suffices to learn the lessons of life, we are left to our own experiences. Sometimes that is a good thing, at other times the experiences that we learn from are bitter pills to swallow. Ones that we will not easily forget.

Instruction is a good teacher also. As Nathan Robertson pointed out, *"You can learn more from instruction than you can from experience simply because you cannot experience everything."* But, there is one way in which we can get the depth that experience brings and the breadth that instruction brings and that is to learn from the experiences of others. These past few weeks we have been trying to do just that. To be instructed by the experiences of some women who learned valuable life lessons from the experiences that they went through.

The woman that I want us to spend a few moments with this morning had a basic human desire that for the longest time went unmet. It is a desire that is felt by every person who breathes on this planet. Some may deny their longing for it but, if they are really honest, they will admit to it. That is, to experience unconditional, unreserved, unrestrained, unmistakable love. It is a basic human desire. We want to love, and we need to be loved. Whether from a parent, or a spouse, or our children, or a trusted friend, we need love. Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote, *"Tis' better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all."* Though we know it may be a very painful proposition; though we know our frail hearts could be left in pieces, we still seek love. We want to be loved.

The woman I am thinking about this morning went to great lengths to elicit love from a husband who was either unwilling or unable to give her what she so desperately wanted. At some point in most of our lives, we have struggled loving someone who would not love us back. You desired two-way love but, when you gave yourself fully, you got very little in return. Sometimes the answer to such a situation is difficult but not very complicated. Sometimes the answer is to say goodbye. You are dating someone who you have given your heart to, and who you see a future with but, as time goes by, you come to the painful realization that they just don't feel the same way. Sometimes it's just better to say goodbye.

But what do you do when the other person in the relationship is a parent? Or a child? Or, as in the case of this young woman, a spouse? Walking away from a

relationship like that is not as easy and, more importantly may not be in God's plans for you. In fact, if you do walk away, you may be in direct violation of God's commands. So how does a person continue in a relationship where meaningful love is either absent or in short supply? Just how do you do that?

Several weeks ago, we visited the Garden of Eden and met two people who were just made for each other. Really, they were. Two people who were made in the image of God and designed to love Him and to love each other purely and to live in perfect relationship with one another, but who disobeyed their Creator and really threw everything into confusion. They had a wonderful environment and meaningful work and all the ingredients for a completely fulfilling relationship. But everything changed, and a civil war began which has continued to this day. Where once the man and the woman were totally secure in their relationship with one another, now there was suspicion and isolation and the assigning of blame. They were now people with crooked natures living in a cursed world.

In *Genesis 4* that crooked nature led one man by the name of Lamech to, for the first time in recorded history, take two wives to himself. This is important to our story this morning. Where once the norm was for each man to leave his father and mother and to cling to his one wife, now, because of sin, men began to collect wives like I collect model cars. It wasn't in the original plan, but sin changed a lot of things.

The woman I am speaking about was one of two wives of her husband. In fact, she was just one among a number of intimate relationships he had. As bad as that may sound, as bad as that is, there was another major complication to her story. It seems that her main rival, the other main woman in this polygamous arrangement....*was her sister!* And her story is told in *Genesis 29*, found on page 28 in the pew Bibles.

Go back into your biblical history for just a moment with me, would you? You may recall God called a man named *Abraham* to leave his home town and travel to a land far, far away where He said He would bless him with a child whose own progeny would, in turn, be a blessing to the whole world. Finally, the child of promise came. His name was *Isaac*. Isaac in turn had two sons; twins. The first was named *Esau* who was a foolish and dimwitted man. The second was named *Jacob*. Jacob was the favorite of his mother, Rebekah, who schooled him in the arts of scheming and deception. Jacob once went so far as to steal the birthright, a special blessing, from his brother. When Esau his brother discovered the theft, he was so incensed that he planned to kill his brother. So, in *chapter 29*, we find Jacob fleeing his brother and seeking out protection by going to live with his mother's brother, His uncle *Laban*.

After a five hundred mile journey, he finally arrives at his destination and is knocked off his feet when he meets a shepherdess, the youngest daughter of his uncle Laban, by the name of Rachel. We pick up the story in the middle of *verse 14* where Laban and Jacob are discussing a business arrangement. **"After Jacob had stayed with him for a whole month, Laban said to him, 'Just because you are a relative of mine, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be.' Now Laban had**

two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel was lovely in form, and beautiful. Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, ‘I’ll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel.’”

We Often Miss Finding Any Joy in a Love-Lacking Marriage (Relationship) Because We Focus on What We Don’t Have.

The agreement between Laban and Jacob is intended to provide for the bride price that was an essential part of marriage contracts. This was a payment made from the groom or his family to the family of the bride. Its function was to serve as a trust fund of sorts to provide for the support of the wife should the husband die or divorce her. We know that the typical bride price was between thirty and forty shekels. Since a shepherd’s annual wage was ten shekels a year, Jacob is in effect paying a premium by working 7 years. But really, he is in no position to negotiate, plus I don’t think he was of a mind to negotiate. He was in love.³⁴³

All of this must have been music to Rachel’s ears. I mean here is a guy willing to pay double the price for her. But to Leah her older sister, it was the same tired song that she had become accustomed to all her life. It was just another indication of her value, or lack thereof. All her life Leah seemed to be the one who was ‘a day late and a dollar short.’ She was the one who seemed to be lacking what the most significant people around her had in abundance.

The writer tells us very little in way of commentary about these women. Most of what we can determine about them has to be gleaned by their actions and reactions to the circumstances surrounding their lives. But in *verse 17*, we gain a little insight into who these women were and can see the origin of the rivalry that characterized home life at the house of Laban. For the author writes, **“Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel was lovely in form, and beautiful.”** Rachel had; Leah had not.

I mean even their names just didn’t seem fair. The first born was named Leah which means “*faint from sickness*” or “*weary*.” Was her named assigned to her because of the circumstances of her birth? Was the pregnancy hard; the labor of her mother torturous? Was she perhaps a sickly child? Certainly, it would not have been unusual to name a child according to the circumstances of his or her birth. Years later, Rachel, just before she dies giving birth (*chapter 35:18*), names her son **Ben-oni: “Son of my trouble.”** Leah’s name may give indication to a hard introduction to life.

But her sister was named Rachel, “*ewe*”, as in “*little lamb*.” I mean what do you want to do when you see a little new born lamb? You want to embrace her, and protect her, and talk to her in a high pitched voice like you do a puppy. “*What a cute little thing*

³⁴³John Walton, *Genesis*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 586.

you are . . .” Lambs, livestock represented wealth and life. Don’t think that the meanings of their names sailed over the heads of these girls or the people around them. Rachel: *Great name*. Leah: *Not*.

The writer tells us something else. The youngest was in both form and face desirable and the other...well, not as much. The only thing said about Leah, that may have touched upon her looks, is in **verse 17** where it says that, “**Leah had weak eyes . . .**” This is a tough one folks, I have to tell you. Commentators and Hebrew scholars differ on just what the author is describing about this girl. Some think that the designation indicates that she was either cross-eyed or possibly even slowly losing her sight. Others think the word should be translated “*delicate*” as is pointed out in a footnote of the NIV Study Bible. That is, they have taken the adjective to be describing a positive feature. Something that indicates a certain vulnerability, tenderness or beauty. Eyes were considered a component of beauty in the ancient world, so it may be that the author was saying she had beautiful eyes.

Whatever the real meaning, the intent is inescapable: Overall Leah’s appearance paled in comparison to the beauty that her younger sister possessed. There was an outside chance that Leah might grab the congeniality award at the Miss Mesopotamia Beauty Contest, but she would never rein as queen.³⁴⁴

Hey, let’s be honest shall we? Doors just seem to open more readily for beautiful people. Being attractive confers enormous genetic and social advantages. Attractive people (both men and women) have been shown by a number of studies to be thought of as more intelligent and as better lovers. On a whole, they earn more money and they are more likely to marry. How many average looking people do you see in the movies or on television? I mean the female reporters on Fox News look like they were gleaned from the cast of *The Bold and the Beautiful*.

The message to beautiful people from the culture around us is that you are smarter, better, more worthy of love, acceptance, and honor than the rest of the population. But it is a message that is not just found in our own culture but one that has come through loud and clear down through the ages. And it has caused the rest of us to scramble to improve what God created.

Medieval noblewomen swallowed arsenic and dabbed on bats' blood to improve their complexions; Victorian ladies removed their ribs to give themselves a wasp waist. Recipes for homemade cosmetics were kept in the kitchen right beside those used to feed the family. The desire to be beautiful is as old as civilization. In his autobiography, Charles Darwin noted a “universal passion for adornment”, often involving “wonderfully great” suffering.

Today, beauty products represent a \$160 billion-a-year global industry, encompassing make-up (\$18 billion), skin care (\$24 billion), hair care (\$38 billion), and

³⁴⁴Mathews, 22.

fragrances (\$15 billion). Cosmetic surgery, which consists of anything from botox injections to chin implants is up 220 percent since 1997 (\$20 billion). Many billions more are spent on health clubs and diet pills.

The fact is that Americans spend more each year on beauty than they do on education. Analysts at Goldman Sachs estimate that the global beauty industry is growing at up to 7 percent a year, more than twice the rate of the developed world's Gross Domestic Products. In Brazil, there are more Avon ladies than there are men and women in the armed services. All hoping to latch onto what Charles Revson, the founder of Revlon once called "*hope in a jar*." The hope that they will be accepted and loved like the others.

Is it any wonder that for a huge host of women, beauty and not brains, retains the number one position throughout life even into middle age and beyond? As someone noted, the reason that the average woman would rather have beauty than brains is that she knows that the average man can *see* better than he can *think*. One time, a hostile husband mouthed off to his wife, "*how can someone be so pretty and so dumb?*" She answered, "*I'm pretty so that you will love me. I'm dumb so that I will love you.*"

All her life Leah was "*the smart one*." The one with the "*wonderful personality*" and perhaps, the "*nice eyes*," but always living in the shadows of a sister whose most noteworthy achievement had little to do with character and everything to do with genetics.

And yet, Leah had the same hopes and dreams of any young woman. Perhaps to one day be married, to raise a family and be loved for who she is - not what she could, with enormous effort and money rearrange herself to be. Maybe, as she looked at what she didn't have, she began to feel a bit panicked; as if everything she ever wanted was slipping away. Maybe that's why she decided to go along with the scheme of her wicked father.

We continue reading at *verse 19*. **"Laban said, 'It's better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay here with me.' So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her. Then Jacob said to Laban, 'Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to lie with her.' So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast. But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah and gave her to Jacob, and Jacob lay with her"(Genesis 29:19-23).**

Now, I know what you're thinking. I mean is this guy some sort of dummy that he can't tell the difference between the one that he reportedly loved and her sister? Again, a bit of history might help. You need to know that the custom of the culture was that after the days of celebration and feasting were completed, the veiled bride was then escorted in darkness to the chambers where her husband waited for her. Add to this the spirited beverages that were plentiful at a wedding feast and it is quite conceivable that Jacob the deceiver, could himself have been deceived.

But think of Leah. I mean here is a girl who might be going blind. Here is a girl who as some commentators suggest, may have fallen in love with Jacob as he worked those seven years around her father's house. Here is a woman who was always keenly aware of what she lacked. Perhaps she thought, *"Well this may be my only chance to be married. Let me go along with my father's wishes and worry about working things out later. Surely, he'll learn to love me."*

But folks, sooner or later the sun rises and you sober up. And that's what happened. We read in *verse 25*, **"When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, 'What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn't I? Why have you deceived me?'"** He expects to wake up to *strawberry swirl* Rachel and instead finds *plain ol' vanilla* Leah in his bed.

After listening to her father's lame excuse in *verse 26* about the customs of the culture, she hears him promise in *verse 27* that someone else will be joining her and her new husband. *Verse 27 reads*, **"Finish this daughter's bridal week; then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work."** Was there any doubt that Jacob would sign up for an additional hitch of service? And, all at once, she realizes that she was just kidding herself. Things were not going to be as she had hoped. They never would.

I wonder how many people wake up six months after saying *"I do,"* and think, *"This is not what I had planned. This is not the person I thought I was marrying. I feel as if I have been deceived. I didn't know he had this sort of temper. I would never have guessed that money was so important to her. I thought his little jealousies before we were married were so cute, but this person seeks to control every aspect of my life. I should have seen it. We shouldn't have spent so much time alone, but should have spent more time with family and friends; then I would have really seen her. Then I would have known what he's really like."* Alice Mathews said, "Life can seem bleak indeed when the most important relationship in our experience turns out to be marred at the outset by deception or disappointment."³⁴⁵ Yes, it can.

We are people scarred by sin, and we come together with others who suffer like disfigurement, and think somehow that marriage will be the great healer. That somehow it will all go away; that marriage will save us. And, when we see that it can not; when we have tasted the bitter fruits of a relationship that could never deliver what we wanted; we feel more than disappointed. We feel cheated.

God designed marriage. He designed relationships for our good. He desires to make us better, more holy, more usable vessels as we give ourselves to His grace and are gently sharpened by the grinding stone of relationships. All of our relationships. But often, instead of reaching up for grace, grace to move ahead, we spend our time dreaming of what could be, maybe what should be. We spend our time firmly concentrating on what we have missed and on what we lack. It is an uncomfortable place to spend much time.

³⁴⁵Ibid., 21.

Jacob, knowing that he's been given an offer he can't refuse capitulates. We read of his response to Laban's proposal starting in *verse 28*: **"And Jacob did so. He finished the week with Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. Laban gave his servant girl Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maidservant. Jacob lay with Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years"**(Genesis 29:28-30). You think you have it rough. But Leah's focus was about to change.

We Will Find Some Joy in a Love-Lacking Marriage If We Focus On What We Do Have.

For Leah a focus change began in *verse 31*. **"When the Lord saw . . ."** God saw. He was not unmindful. Her plight was not an indication that God had turned His back on her. He saw the ache in her heart and **" . . . he opened her womb."** And He did so not once, but seven times. And each time He does so, we see Leah taking that little form into her arm and naming her children. And each child serves as a sort of snapshot, a chapter in her life of evolving focus and faith. And, as we inspect those snapshots up close with a magnifying glass, we can see God slowly redirecting her focus.

Verse 32, "Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, for she said, 'It is because the LORD has seen my misery.'" Reuben literally means, "Behold, a son!" But it sounds much like the Hebrew word for *"he has seen my misery."* Now she knew that all her prayers had been heard. It is a difficult world to navigate if you are forced to do it alone. The birth of this son in the mind of Leah, confirmed that God had not forgotten her. She had every reason to rejoice. God had given her a good gift.

But Leah took the facts as presented to her and came to a conclusion that was not warranted by the facts alone. God has given me a son! He has seen my misery! Her conclusion? **"Surely my husband will love me now" (vs. 32).**

I can picture her a week after the baby's birth saying to a trusted friend in the camp, *"This is God working to make my husband love me. Now we will be one, now our souls will be meshed. Isn't God great?"* Her chief focus was still towards getting her husband to love her. *"Obviously,"* she reasoned, *"it is God's chief focus also for my life, so He has brought me this baby to do the trick."*

Leah had convinced herself that the appearance of this baby on the scene signaled a change of heart on the part of her husband. But it didn't. Was her faith defective? Was God playing a huge cosmic joke on her? God's ultimate purpose in the life of a believer is to bring about good things, to bring about maturity to bring about a more robust faith in the lives of his children and to get them to depend on Him who will never fail them, who will never disappoint. God is not wrestling with His own sin nature, and selfish desires. He wants, and He knows, that His children will find their chief fulfillment and joy in Him.

But, as God works out His purposes in my life, sometimes it's hard to see. **Isaiah 55:9** reads, **"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."** Are you saying that it is sometimes God's will for my husband, a parent, a child not to love me? No. God is love. God is in the business of making us like Himself. He wants love to characterize all our relationships. But, He will work through even a hard-heart, like some of you are forced to deal with today, to bring you to Himself and to help you find true acceptance and love.

Sometimes we are just so sure that this or that good gift in our lives is God's way of fulfilling a specific desire that we have long held in our heart. And you know what? Sometimes it is. But only if those desires, by being fulfilled, will ultimately bring us closer to the realization that we will never be satisfied in this life until we find our ultimate satisfaction in Him.

We must believe that. We must know that. Jacobs's heart did not change. And I am sure, since her focus was still on getting her husband to love her, Leah suffered great disappointment for a time. It is always what happens when our focus is wrong.

Some months later, *verse 33* tells us, **"She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, 'Because the LORD heard that I am not loved, he gave me this one too.' So she named him Simeon."** *"Surely now this baby named, 'one who hears,' this is God's signal that He is now going to finally turn my husband's heart to me."*

It sounds as if there is little difference between *verse 32* and *33*. It sounds as if her focus is still firmly fixed on getting her husband to love her so that she could be fulfilled and experience joy. But there is a subtle difference in this verse from the last. Literally in the Hebrew Leah says, **"Because the Lord had heard that I was hated" (I am not loved - NIV).**

In *verse 32*, she sees God working to bring about her desire of a magnificent marriage by making her husband love her; making him knitted to her, one soul to another. In *Verse 33*, she backs up just a bit and says, *"Obviously the birth of this new son means that God is working to take the hate, the bitterness that I sense in my husband's heart away. This is the beginning of, if not a magnificent marriage, a solid one."* But soon she realized that she was still not loved. That Jacob still only had eyes for Rachel. Another gift, but the same result. More disappointment, though possibly not as deep, since her expectations were not as great.

Do it again. *Verse 34* reads, **"Again she conceived, and when she gave birth to a son she said, 'Now at last my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.' So he was named Levi."** Lavah *"attached"* means to join together, like bringing two pieces of cloth and sewing it with thread. It may not be a single piece of cloth; the two may not have been bond together with Crazy Glue but at least they are held together by the common thread of three sons. And, with each child, Leah's hopes rose that this child would be the one that made the difference in her

marriage. That this, child's birth would draw her husband's heart to her. But again she was disappointed.

Many women go to great lengths to gain and then keep the love of their husbands who do not seem to respond as they would wish. It is hard to live in a relationship that is not characterized by deep, loving commitment. I think God wants that for each of us. Some will be blessed with one such relationship or maybe even more. But the longer I live, the more I see that there are many who live in the never-ending cycle of hope raised and then dashed to the ground.

God saw that. And He knew that Leah would forever be disappointed as long as her focus remained steady on this man who, though he may improve, might never give her what she really wanted. What she really needs. Someone who will love, and respect, and honor her, just as she is.

Verse 35 reads “She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, ‘This time I will praise the LORD.’ So she named him Judah, (Praising) then she stopped having children.”

“For the first time in naming her sons, Leah turned from expressing her yearning for Jacob’s love to accepting and basking in God’s love.”³⁴⁶ And for the first time Leah stepped back and saw not her lack, but her blessings. We can find joy in a love-lacking marriage by changing our focus from what we do not have to what we do have.

Truth be told, nothing had changed with Jacob. His affections were still toward the beautiful Rachel. She could not change him. She might never change him. But she could change herself. Alice Mathews said, *“The most important step toward joy in a loveless marriage is to change our focus from what we do not have to what we do have.”³⁴⁷*

I would like to say that the story ended here. I'd like to say that Leah was forever more victorious in her focus. But that wasn't the case. In the next chapter, we see Leah and Rachel entering into what amounted to a baby derby. She slipped back and forth between her focus. That's a lot like your life, right?

It is interesting to note how things ultimately ended up, though. Remember that fourth son of hers? Judah? The Bible says that from Judah's line came Israel's greatest king, David. And from his line came the greatest king of all, Jesus Christ. There are few women who ever walked the earth that could say that. Very few.

After Rachel died, Leah and Jacob were left alone; we don't know for how long. We don't know if she ever forged that close bond with him. But we do know that when she

³⁴⁶Ibid., 26.

³⁴⁷Ibid.

died she was buried in the same cave that Abraham and Sarah, and Isaac and Rebekah were buried in. He honored her in her death.

So how does a person continue in a relationship where meaningful love is either absent or in short supply? Just how do you do that? By taking our eyes off of what we lack and putting them on the good things God has done. ***We can find joy in a love-lacking marriage by changing our focus from what we do not have to what we do have.***

It may help to put this truth into practice by remembering the three “R’s.” First you may need to:

1. **Ratchet down your expectations.** You may never have the marriage your sister, neighbor or parents have. It’s not the end. You may not have the best marriage of all time but, with God’s help, you can have a good one characterized by mutual respect. And, stop thinking that the romanticized, Hollywood view of marriage is real. Hollywood standards are rarely the ones a solid marriage is made of. Next you may need to. . .
2. **Refocus your priorities.** If your focus is to have your spouse fulfill all your unconditional, unreserved, unrestrained, unmistakable love needs - you may be disappointed. God brought the man and the woman together because both picked up the slack where the other lacked. He brought them together because they were better together than alone. He did not bring them together for the purpose of fulfilling all your deepest needs and longings. Only God can do that. Focus on Him and . . .
3. **Rest in God’s love.** God knows your heart. He sees your pain. He is there to fill the gap that your spouse could never fill. Let Him do it. Let Him love you. If you do that, you will be better prepared to love your husband or wife.

We can find joy in a love-lacking marriage by changing our focus from what we do not have to what we do have. Open your eyes. See all that God has given you. And thank Him for it.

A WOMAN GOD CAN USE: *THE WOMAN TAKEN IN SIN*
DELIVERED AT THE WEST ESSEX BAPTIST CHURCH ON 6/6/04
John 8

**When the Light of the World exposes our sin, we either choose the darkness or repent and walk with Him in grace and truth.³⁴⁸*

PURPOSE: The listener should recognize their sinfulness and rather than retreating in shame, allow Christ's gracious forgiveness to cover their sin.

Many years ago, a woman came to me and said, *"I have to tell you something."* From the sound of her voice I knew that what was coming was not a comment on the weather or an invite to her son's birthday party. This woman, who was a believer, raised in a Christian home, then proceeded to tell me of an adulterous affair that she was in. The full gravity of the situation, which already was beginning to crush her conscience, now haunted her every waking moment, since she had found out that she was pregnant. And, there was a very high possibility that this child was not her husband's. And, she wanted to know what would become of her. She wanted to know what she should do. I listened. I was young, still in seminary and I said to myself, *"This is the real thing."* Real failure; real suffering; real confusion. As real as it gets. And I had to give her an answer.

What do you do when you have blown it, and now look over into a chasm of your future which is deeper and darker than anything you have ever encountered in your life? What do you do when your head and your heart agree that this time there is no hope? What choice do you have when light finally pushes into your darkness and exposes the dreadful decisions you have made?

God forbid if we approach the scriptures each week to have a calm discussion on religious theory. We do not direct our comments to some nameless, faceless person. We are studying ourselves, or at least we should be. The truth is that there is much on the videotape of our lives which, if exposed, would cause us to retreat in shame. But the question is, what do we do when the things done in the darkness are exposed? What do we do when the light of God exposes the sin in our life? What choice do we have? Do we indeed have choices to make?

Turn in your Bibles to ***John 8***, which is on page 1037, in your pew Bibles. But before we look at the story, there are three things that must be said. One thing is about the text itself. Another concerns the setting of the story. And lastly, we must say something about the religious climate of the day.

³⁴⁸Nancy Hardin gives a helpful description of what might have happened in relation to this story in Robinson's book. Haddon W. Robinson, ed., *Biblical Sermons*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 191.

The first has to do with the transmission of the text itself, something we almost never address. If you are looking in the pew Bible, or if you have any modern version which was published in the last decade or so, you probably have a note at the top of this section that reads something like this: “*The earliest and most reliable manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have John 7:53-8:11.*”

Some scholars have grave doubts as to whether this story should even be in the Bible. Many of the early manuscripts do not mention it. Saint Augustine believed that the story may have been removed from the text of the gospel because, “*Some were of slight faith,*” and to “*avoid scandal.*” We can’t be sure, but it would seem that, in the very early days, the people who transmitted the text thought that this was a dangerous story, a justification for a light view of adultery and, therefore, omitted it. Better safe than sorry. After all, the Christian church was a little island in a sea of paganism. They were trying, in effect, to safeguard Jesus’ character and teaching.

But the fact that it doesn’t sound “*right*” shouldn’t be the deciding indicator whether this story is real or not. The fact that Jesus didn’t say or act in a “*proper*” way should not be a factor in the acceptance of this text into the canon of scripture. Jesus was often seen as doing the wrong thing. He regularly hung out with the wrong people and said the wrong thing. In His day, He was accused of being a glutton and a drunkard. Scholar William Barclay said, “*In spite of the doubt that the modern translations cast on it, and in spite of the fact that the early manuscripts do not include it, we may be sure that this is a real story about Jesus, although one so gracious that for long men were afraid to tell it.*”³⁴⁹ I’m glad that scholars are so concerned with truth that they would voice doubt, but at the end of the day I think it belongs where it is.

The second thing that we must do is understand the setting in which this narrative is found. People from all over the land of Israel had gathered in the capitol city of Jerusalem to celebrate. It was one of the prescribed feasts - the *Feast of Tabernacles* or more commonly referred to as the *Feast of Booths*, and it really was a joyous occasion. God had instructed the people back in Deuteronomy to put aside a week each year to commemorate His gracious dealings with His people. To remind them that there was a time, years before, when the people did not live in comfortable homes but lived instead in temporary lean-tos and booths in the wilderness. They ate manna from heaven and quail and drank water that was sometimes provided in miraculous ways.

But then God brought them into a permanent homeland that really was quite lush. It was said to flow with milk and honey. That metaphor may sound a bit . . . sticky to us, but it would be like saying it was a land with a chicken in every pot, two cars in every garage, and a Nintendo Game Cube hooked to every T.V. Or PlayStation. Or X-Box.

So, just about the time the harvest was gathered each year, the Jews came together to give thanks to God for His many blessing in this great land that He had given to them.

³⁴⁹William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, The Daily Study Bible Series, vol. 2. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), 292.

As a reminder of their roots, God instructed them to build booths to live in during feast week. Makeshift shelters made of palm branches with loosely thatched roofs constructed to last for about a week. The kids, I imagine, had a great time camping out. I assume dad and mom would have rather been staying at the Jerusalem Hilton or the equivalent. But, it reminded them of the way-things-used-to-be, or at least that was what the festival was designed to do.

Jerusalem, during that eight day festival resembled a shantytown.³⁵⁰ Temporary dwellings sprang up all over - in streets, in public gardens, on flat rooftops all over the great city. People had come to give thanks to God and to celebrate his goodness. Well, *some* did, anyway. But as one observed, as often happens with religious holidays celebrated year after year, the Feast of Booths had become, for the average Jew, the equivalent of Spring Break - a week-long party, void of much significance. An excuse for “*revelry, drunkenness and debauchery. It rather resembled a modern-day Mardi Gras.*”³⁵¹ The Mardi Gras of a religious nation.

Many of those who came to Jerusalem that year had heard of a young rabbi by the name Jesus. I can imagine that lots of conversation and gossip was passed on that week as the women prepared meals for their families over open fires and the men spoke of politics and the price of grain. “*Was he a good man? I’ve heard that he’s a deceiver.*” Some had heard his teachings firsthand; words filled with wisdom. Most had, at least, heard stories of His miracles.

But they had witnessed many so-called Messiahs come and go before. Time and again they had had their hopes raised by one who claimed to have the answers. But, as they followed, they were led down a path to nowhere.

But there was something about this man that was different. Even the temple guards that were sent out to arrest him and who seethed with cynicism, came back saying, “**No one ever spoke the way this man does**” (*John 7:46*). They were drawn to the young preacher who spoke of repentance, forgiveness and a new hope. That’s the setting of our story.

One other thing you need to know. Because of his rising popularity among the people and because of his unorthodox - some would say *blasphemous* words and acts - a movement had begun to gather strength among the religious and political leaders. A movement whose chief end was to squash this infant Jesus movement. Some thought they were safeguarding the historic faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; but most were trying to protect their own influence and power.

They knew that they couldn’t forcibly take him and put him out of service, since such a crude method would incite the wrath of a segment of the people that they sought to rule upon them. So, they tried to discredit him. They tried to get Him to say something

³⁵⁰Robinson, 183.

³⁵¹Ibid.

foolish that would then go on record and with which they could beat him with. One of the most blatant attempts employing such tactics was recorded in *John 8*.

It was early one morning and Jesus was about to teach. *Verse 2* says, “**At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them.**” They were hungry, and Jesus, the Light of the World, was about to feed them. And, there in the shadow of Herod's great temple, a drama began to unfold in front of the curious, the pious, and the party-goers that would not only test this young Rabbi but would decide whether a young, foolish woman would live or die.

Verse 3 tells us that an interruption breaks the tranquil scene between teacher and seeker in the court yard. *Verse 3* says, “**The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery . . .**” Caught in the very act! Where did they find her? Where was her lover? When did this happen? Who is this woman? She doesn't seem to have been a prostitute or one who did this sort of thing as a ritual. She probably was just a woman who, for whatever reason, gave up her virtue amidst the party of feast week.

How do these things happen? How does it ever happen? Does anybody wake up one morning and say, “*Today is the day I break my wedding vows?*” Perhaps her husband was away, out of the country on a business trip. Transportation was painfully slow. Perhaps he had been away for a long while with a long while still to go before he would return. At first she managed, but now, during one of the happiest times on the calendar, she felt resentful. She was all alone. Perhaps her marriage was not a good one to begin with. It is not hard to imagine a busy merchant neglecting his wife and taking her for granted. It's really not that fanciful an idea. It's not that much a stretch.

So, when friends asked her to accompany them to one of the hundred or so parties going on that night around the city, she went. Nancy Hardin draws a vivid picture of a possible scenario that evening.³⁵²

She was just one of the thousands of young people singing and dancing well into the night. She felt good; better than she had felt in as long as she could remember. It was there, as the wines flowed freely, that she met a young, good-looking Jew with dark eyes and strong arms who had come to Feast alone. As they spoke, he made her feel attractive. He made her feel wanted. She felt a surge of energy that she had not felt in a long time. Suddenly, she realized that her loneliness had been chased away by this dark stranger.

As they laughed and chatted, he finally persuaded her to leave the party. They waded slowly through the thinning streets as the city began to calm down. Finally, they found themselves at the entranceway to the young man's festival booth and they entered into a world of their own little intimate affair, surrounded by the darkness. The next morning, as light broke over the hills, what the night before had hidden would now be seen through the loosely tied branches of the booth.

³⁵²Robinson, 183-185.

However it happened, whatever the facts; one thing was for certain. That morning a group of disgruntled Pharisees who were on their way to monitor the teaching of Jesus caught wind of what was going on. Immorality was not rare, but most of the time religious leaders looked the other way. They hardly ever enforced the punishment that the Law prescribed.

But, as they saw this couple, one bright, young, enterprising Pharisee was struck by a brilliant idea. Why not use this unfortunate situation which providence had dropped directly into their laps to destroy Jesus? Why not bring this couple directly to the temple and put it to the rabbi? Why not deliver in the form of two, warm, sinful bodies a dilemma that would destroy his credibility no matter how he answered the question? This was too good to be true.

So, they roughly grabbed the young woman from the embrace of her lover. As she reached for a garment to cover her naked body, the young man she was with, bolted. She knew who they were from their dress and begged for mercy and a reprieve, but they dragged her weeping and fearful from the shelter. They barely masked their contempt for this guilty woman as she stumbled down the dusty, narrow, slowly filling streets toward the temple.

What kind of questions flooded her mind? *“How did this happen? How could he leave me? What will my husband say? What is going to happen to me now?”* She felt cheapened, rejected and destroyed.

As they entered the temple court, there He was having assumed the teaching position, sitting before his eager congregation. They did not hesitate to interrupt the proceedings. They shoved the trembling woman before his feet and said in *verse 4*, **“Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?”**

Someone might think that these leaders were most concerned with the moral integrity of the community. That they had launched a crusade to morally disinfect the city and had decided to start here at the Festival with an easy target. But, if you had thought that, you would have been wrong. *Verse 6* says, **“They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.”** As members of the “*Get Jesus*” movement³⁵³ they knew that these entwined lovers offered the perfect trap. They cared little about the immorality of the situation, little about the Law and even less about true godliness. They wanted this Jesus movement stopped. And it would stop . . . today.

Say what you want about the Pharisees; they were not dumb men. They knew the law and they knew people. If Jesus recognized the Mosaic Law and agreed that the woman should be stoned, then they could easily go to the Roman authorities and say that

³⁵³ Alice Mathews, *A Woman Jesus Can Teach* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 1991), 116.

this Jesus was encouraging others to usurp the authority that Rome had reserved only for itself: That being the execution of criminals. More than that, if he agreed that she be killed, he would lose the support of those who had been warmed by his message of mercy and grace. He would no longer be called a friend of sinners.

On the other hand, if he said that she should not be stoned then he was going against the Law and teaching others to break it. In fact, could he not be seen as at least giving tacit approval to those who commit adultery? Either answer would sully his reputation and his movement.

Look, Jesus knew these men. He knew their hearts. He knew that they were not above using someone else, no matter what the cost to them personally, to get what they wanted. They were dark on the inside no matter what others may have thought. He also knew what they needed. They needed to see how much closer they were to her, than they were to God.

We have a way of being horrified by the sins of others. Although we are not foolish enough to totally dismiss our own sins, we know the circumstances of our own transgressions and think *“if anyone really knew what drove me to this, they would understand.”*

At times, I try to view myself as others would view me. I say something uncaring or hurtful. It bothers me. But, when I separate myself from the act, when I project my words or attitudes onto another face and body and replay the same dialogue, often I am appalled. It is not an unreasonable thing for a son of God to be appalled and jarred by sinful displays. It is easy for me to say, *“That person needs Jesus. That brother needs to get a grip. That person needs God’s grace.”* I can see that clearly. But, sometimes, I am just too close to really see its horror in me. Sometimes, we need the help of someone with loving wisdom to point it out to us. Sometimes, when they do, I see the perverse crookedness of my heart and know that I am often closer to the prostitute in the street than I am to heaven. The Pharisees needed to see how much closer they were to her than they were to God.

He also knew this woman, and He knew what she needed, too. Unlike the Pharisees, she had come to a sudden realization of the gravity of her own sin. As she looked into the face of this man, who in her mind held her life in his hands, she knew that she was just a stone’s throw away from death. She was a humiliated and hurting sinner who had indeed violated God’s law. She was one in great need of forgiveness and restoration and hope. But how could He give them both what they needed most?

Jesus’ response to his questioners was interesting. **Verse 7** reads, **“But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger.”** What was he writing? Some think that Jesus was indeed caught off guard by their question, and he knelt down to silently pray. If it was me there that day, I know how I would have made like Ralph Kramden from the old *Honeymooners* show and said, *“Hummana, hummana, hummana.”* Or I would have started to ramble, *“Well, this is an interesting question you bring to me*

this morning, now let's look at the facts", not having a clue how I was going to answer but just stalling for time in the hopes that something brilliant would hit me. I've become quite good at that over the years. The Pharisees must have eyed each other and thought that Jesus was stalling. "We've got him. The game was good Jesus. You did well, but . . . Checkmate."

Like a detective whose eye is trained to seek out and make sense of the clues at that scene, we can look at the threads of evidence left behind in the text to maybe come up with a plausible explanation to discover, if possible, what was going on. To determine what he was writing, and then decide if it had anything to do with the message of the narrative.

Alice Matthews in her book, *A Woman Jesus Can Teach*, brought to my attention the nuance of change in the normal Greek word for the phrase, "to write" and the one that John uses here in this text.³⁵⁴ The normal Greek word for *write* is "*graphein*" but the word used in **verse 6** is "*katagraphein*" which is a compound verb, which means "*to write against*" or "*to write a record down against*." As Jesus' fingers traced Aramaic letters in the dust, and the crowd inched forward to see what he was doing, is it possible that Jesus was confronting the Pharisees and accusers of this woman with a record of their own sin? *Hypocrite. Liar. Deceiver. Gossip*. Or, perhaps, a simple recording of the Ten Commandments would have been enough. Certainly, the early tradition of Church history believed that to be the case.

Although, we will never know for sure, it makes good sense. The Pharisees had billed themselves as the bastions of righteousness. All that was good could be found in them. And to the naked eye, it may have appeared that that may be the case. But, Jesus was always more concerned with the matter of the heart than with what appeared to be the case before men. Their brand of righteousness may have been good enough to cut muster with the rest of society, but it wasn't enough to get them to heaven.

In **Matthew 5:20**, Jesus said, **"For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."** And, if it needs to surpass what they themselves thought was good enough, then not only they, but all who followed them at a distance, would end up in hell. The righteousness that God requires is one obtained not from following law but from receiving grace. Grace receivers will be the ones singing with the heavenly chorus, while all other voices will be silenced. Grace receivers, who take the words of Jesus seriously, when he said a few verses before, **"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."** Not the poor spirited, timid, Casper milquetoast souls, but those, who in great humility, bow low enough in recognition of their sin to enter the low gate into the kingdom.

But these men who appeared before Jesus that day, with vindictive anger in their eyes and an outward form of righteousness, stood much too tall to enter in. The fact is

³⁵⁴Matthews, 118.

they had become so comfortable with their outward brand of righteousness that they could not even see their own sinfulness. They were able to easily identify the sinfulness in others, but mostly what they could see in themselves was an individual who was doing better than the average citizen.

It's funny how we look at the Pharisees twenty centuries down the road and have a sort of contempt for their brand of religion. And yet, so often when we allow it, God's word shows how much of them we have in us. Incensed one minute at the dishonesty of a local official taking a bribe and the next not thinking twice about "*fibbing*" on our personal income taxes. We note the gossiping tongue of another believer when the fact that we have shared that fact with another puts us in the same category. "*We get so angry at other peoples' sins that we are tempted to reach down and pick up stones . . .*"³⁵⁵

Verse 7 (second half) "...When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.' Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground."

"You want to stone her, go ahead. Do what you've got to do. But let the one who is without sinful desires be the one to initiate the execution. Let the one who is innocent of adultery with his body, but also with his mind be the first to throw a stone." If the deed is righteous, let the righteous among you do the deed.

The law gave specific instruction on how to carry out capital punishment. **Deuteronomy 17:6-7** says, **"On the testimony of two or three witnesses a man shall be put to death, but no one shall be put to death on the testimony of only one witness. The hands of the witnesses must be the first in putting him to death, and then the hands of all the people . . ."** One of the witnesses had to be the first one to throw a stone. In doing so, they carried a great responsibility in bringing evidence. Jesus in effect was saying, *"You all are so concerned with the Law and in cleaning up this town. Well, by all means begin the work with this woman if you have a clear conscience about the adultery issues in your own life."*

They had no right to condemn if they themselves were guilty of breaking the moral law themselves. Jesus was not saying that this woman had not sinned; He was only saying that they were not the ones to throw the first stone. In fact, there was only one present that morning that was thoroughly qualified to do that job. And He chose to offer her the path toward forgiving grace. The religious leaders exposed this woman's sin and cast her into the darkness. Jesus recognized the darkness of her sin but lead her to the Light.

"At this," says verse 9, "those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there." They took the only course available to them. In walking away, they were shown to be no better than the very sinner that only moments before they were willing to let die.

³⁵⁵Robinson, 188.

You know what I find hard to believe? I find it hard to believe that Jesus loved those Pharisees as much as He loved that young woman. And, in me finding that so hard to believe, maybe I reveal that my own heart is closer to theirs than it is to His. Jesus Christ came to die for the sins on the hearts of those Pharisees as well as for the sins of the flesh that were on public display that morning.

I am sure that this woman was thrown a bit off balanced by the whole scene. She was confused and bewildered. I mean everything was happening just so fast. She knew she was guilty. If anybody knew that; it was her. Nancy Hardin noted that “*sin has a strange unbalancing effect on our lives.*”³⁵⁶ Unbalancing in the sense that, like the Pharisees, sometimes we either can’t see our own sin or think that they are a trivial thing compared to the sins of others. When that happens, we are tempted to pick up stones and cast them at the nearest sinner we see.

But sometimes the unbalancing effect of sin takes us in the other direction. We become so consumed with our sin that we can hardly think of anything else. We are hounded by guilt, we know we are deserving of stones being thrown at us and even hope that somehow someone will do it; that someone will punish us so that we have a sense that it is over, that it has been paid for. We sometimes become so unbalanced that we forget that *Someone* already has.

But neither of those options are the ones Jesus offered that woman that day. Now she was alone with him. She sheepishly looked over from the dirt to the One who was still writing. Their eyes locked for a moment. We resume reading in *verse 10*, “**Jesus straightened up and asked her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ ‘No one, sir,’ she said. ‘Then neither do I condemn you,’ Jesus declared. ‘Go now and leave your life of sin.’**”

There was only one person present that morning that was thoroughly qualified to throw the first stone. And he chose to offer her the path toward forgiving grace. When the Light of the World exposes our sin, we either choose the darkness, or repent and walk with Him in grace and truth. When Christ’s light shines itself upon the darkness in your soul, the sin buried deep within, we have one of only two options. We either run like roaches back behind the safety of the walls or we walk toward the light, repent of our sin and receive grace.

This past week after dinner I read this story to my family and asked them what they thought. Someone said almost apologetically, “*It sounds as if Jesus was not concerned with her sin.*” Notice what was not said. Jesus did not say, “*Listen, what you did wasn’t wrong; that’s just your uptight upbringing talking to you.*” He didn’t say, “*What you did was wrong . . . I guess, technically but don’t get worked up over it, it’s not that big a deal.*” What he said was, “**Go now and leave your life of sin.**” He was calling her to make a decision. He was calling her to repent, to “*change her mind*” about what she had done. To turn from her sin. Until we do that we have not repented.

³⁵⁶Ibid., 189.

Notice that Jesus does not say as He had said to others, “*Your sins are forgiven.*” Why not? Well, she had not asked for forgiveness, so He did not grant it. What He did offer her was a possibility of grace. What He did offer her was the possibility of a new start. The grace He offered was costly. One need only look to the cross to see His verdict on the seriousness of sin.

We don’t know what happened to that woman. We don’t know what she chose. Jesus that day told her that she had a future. He told her that the most important thing is what was ahead, not what was behind. When the Light of the World exposes our sin, we either choose the darkness, or repent and walk with Him in grace and truth.

As I spoke to that young woman many years ago, I had had little experience with such things. But I had had experience with sin. I had had the feeling of hopelessness and helplessness that she was now experiencing. So I told her to make a choice. Choose to walk toward the Light. Choose to be a grace receiver.

God offers you that same choice this morning. Maybe you are here this morning and you are consumed with guilt over sin which you are afraid if others knew about they would pick up stones and justifiably hurl them in your direction. But they have no cause to hurl stones. They have enough to worry about.

Now you are face to face with the Son of God. And you wonder if your sins are not too deep, too dark, too gross, too unspeakable to be forgiven. Maybe you believe it could be for someone else but not for me. “*Has there ever been someone like me?*” But God’s answer to you is in the outstretched arms of His Son who has already paid for those sins. ***Verse 10*** says that “**Jesus straightened up and asked her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ ‘No one, sir,’ she said. ‘Then neither do I condemn you,’ Jesus declared. ‘Go now and leave your life of sin.’**” There is another chance.

But you have to take that first step. You can leave this room today free from your past but you have to decide to take one step toward Jesus.

There are two ways that lay before you this day. Only one will lead to life. When the Light of the World exposes our sin, we either choose the darkness, or repent and walk with Him in grace and truth. God can forgive those who decide to become grace receivers. God can use people who decide to become grace receivers. Become a grace receiver today.

APPENDIX B

SHORT WRITTEN FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES

The following short written answers concerning four sermons evaluated from a larger series on women in the Bible were provided by thirty-two people who are regular attendees of the West Essex Baptist Church in Livingston, New Jersey. Their responses are recorded exactly as they were written long-hand by the participants when the focus groups convened. Their written responses were followed by a discussion period (Appendix C).

A brief biography and some pertinent background information for each participant is provided for the reader.

Key to Focus Group Designations:

M= Married
S= Single
D= Divorced
W= White (Caucasian)
B= Black
BA= Black African
WI= West Indian
A= Asian
H= Hispanic
Fe= Female
Ma= Male
Numbers indicate age group

Brief Biographies of Participants

Focus Group #1

Jeannie Couper (M, W, Fe 46-54) – Jeannie comes from a large family and is presently a school nurse. She is married to an emergency medical technician and has four school age children.

Kathy Pregitzer (M, W, Fe 36-45) – Kathy has been a stay-at-home mother to her two young boys for several years. Before having children she worked in the human resource department of a large company.

Ray Kerr (M, W, Ma 55-65) – Ray is recently retired. He and his wife have no children.

Cathy Kerr (M, W, Fe 46-54) – Cathy is a homemaker. She has not worked professionally in a number of years.

Judy Watts (M, W, Fe 55-65) – Judy is a recently retired, urban, public school teacher. She is married and has two grown sons and a granddaughter.

Focus Group #2

Gerard DeMatteo (M, W, Ma 46-54) – Gerard is a vocational Christian worker at a Plymouth Brethren church in a nearby community. He is married and has four daughters.

Judy Gaglioti (S, W, Fe 36-45) – Judy is single and a full-time recreational therapist in a nearby nursing home. She is moderately disabled from a near fatal car accident a number of years ago.

Joann LaBrunda (D, W, Fe 46-54) – Joanne works in a nearby preschool as a teacher's aid. She is recently divorced and has two grown sons and a daughter.

Alia Roufaeal (D, W, Fe 36-45) – Alia is Egyptian and is also recently divorced. She has one grade school son and works full-time.

Anthony Holden (M, W, Ma 27-35) – Anthony is a computer analyst at a nearby private college. He and his wife of two years, Jennifer, do not have any children.

Jennifer Holden (M, W, Fe 27-35) – Jennifer is a preschool teacher. She and her husband Anthony do not have any children.

Mike Pregitzer (M, W, Ma 36-45) – Mike is married (Kathy) and has two young sons. He works for a large payroll company.

Wilfredo Perez (M, H, Ma 46-54) – Wil is married and has two grade school age daughters. He works for a large insurance company.

Horace Derrick (M, B, Ma 36-45) – Horace is married and is a managing director at a financial service company.

Focus Group #3

Rasheeda Tacoronte (M, WI, Fe 36-45) Rasheeda was raised in a Muslim home and has been married to Santiago for about five years after being widowed. She has one high school age son from her previous marriage and one 3-year-old daughter from her present marriage. She works as a Sales Administrator.

Ralph Tolomieri (M, W, Ma 46-54) – Ralph is married with both a teenage son and daughter. He is a shoe repairman.

Bob Orsillo (M, W, Ma 65+) Bob is married with two grown daughters and three grandchildren. He is a retired cabinetmaker and is severely hearing-impaired.

Santiago Tacoronte (M, H, Ma 36-45) – Santiago is married to Rasheeda and has a son by his wife's previous marriage and a daughter from his marriage to Rasheeda. He is a warehouse manager.

Blossom Gonzalez (M, A, Fe 36-45) – Blossom is married with two older teenage daughters. She is an office worker at a local company.

Focus Group #4

April Garuccio (M, W, Fe 46-54) April is separated from her husband and has two grade school age sons. She has just recently become a Christian and works at a number of lower paying jobs to make ends meet financially.

Josh Goolcharan (S, WI, Ma 13-18) Josh is the son of Rasheeda Tacaronte from her first marriage. He is a high school student.

Margaret Waddington (M, W, Fe 36-45) – Margaret is married to Wil Perez and has two grade-school-age daughters. She works for a large insurance company.

Carol Dyson (M, W, Fe 65+) Carol has two grown daughters and several grandchildren. She is divorced and remarried to Don for a number of years.

Todd Reilly (S, W, Ma 36-45) – Todd is single and grew up in rural New England. He is a computer programmer for a small company.

Dennis Alabi (M, BA, Ma 36-45) – Dennis grew up in Nigeria in a Christian home. He is married and has three young daughters. He works as a database analyst for U.P.S.

Rosemary Weidner (M, H, Fe 36-45) – Rosemary grew up in Brazil where most of her family still resides. She continues to learn English. She is married and has one grade-school-age daughter. She works for a cosmetic company in a local mall.

Fernando Rodriguez (M, H, Ma 45-54) – Fernando was born in Columbia moving to the U.S. when he was six. Fernando is married and has four children; three from his wife's previous marriage and one from their present marriage. He works as a mainframe systems support technician.

Focus Group #5

Tina Anton (M, W, Fe 36-45) – Tina was born and raised in Italy and is married to Mike. They have two high school age daughters. Tina is a homemaker.

Michael Anton (M, W, Ma, 46-54) – Mike is Lebanese. Mike is C.E.O of an oil company and has two high school age daughters.

Jessica Rimelis (S, W, Fe 27-35) Jessica is single and is presently working as a nanny in a nearby community.

Lisa Thomas (M, W, Fe 36-45) - Lisa is a lawyer who is presently a stay-at-home mother. She has two young daughters.

John Marcott (M, W, Ma 46-54) - John is the associate pastor of the West Essex Baptist Church and is recently married.

Focus Group #1 SHORT WRITTEN RESPONSES

1. This series has been based largely on Biblical narrative (stories) in which a woman was the main character or personality in the story. If you are a woman do you relate and understand the biblical story better if the central figure is a woman? If you are a man does this fact detract from your understanding of the story? Why?

Jeannie Couper (M, W, Fe 46-54): Not necessarily. Sometimes, yes, but not always. Tried to understand the global picture, i.e., Nabal, Abigail.

Kathy Pregitzer (M, W, Fe 36-45): I think it's interesting in terms of emotional impact but I also find stories about men interesting when their emotions and thoughts are examined and considered for application.

Ray Kerr (M, W, Ma 55-65): [participated orally in discussion but did not write out answers on paper.]

Cathy Kerr (M, W, Fe 46-54): No.

Judy Watts (M, W, Fe 55-65): No. The gender doesn't really matter - it is the heart (key points, ideas, etc.). I try to separate and relate to my own life.

2. How did you feel about listening to a series of messages on women?

Jeannie Couper (M, W, Fe 46-54): Surprised that there were enough, interesting, meaningful women to use. Interesting how God used them differently. Was able to make application to current time. Brought in men/family/communities well. Heard a lot about Alice Matthews and her book/thoughts.

Kathy Pregitzer (M, W, Fe 36-45): Cool! There are so many women and we don't often get a chance to concentrate on their stories, although I would enjoy a similar series on men – the lesser known biblical figures and how they handled situations.

Cathy Kerr (M, W, Fe 46-54): I thought it was an excellent idea. Many of these stories are so familiar we never get any "meat and potatoes" sermons on them [*Later, during the discussion, Cathy defined 'meat and potatoes' as connoting substance*].

Judy Watts (M, W, Fe 55-65): I really liked this series. So many of the women don't even have a name, but their stories are important. I don't think I've ever heard sermons on some of them, such as Leah, but it really made me think.

3. How did you find listening to sermons drawn from people's life stories rather than from the letters by Paul or from the Psalms?

Jeannie Couper (M, W, Fe 46-54): Able to make correlation to life today. Pastor tied current events/happening to past experiences; got the whole story covered in one sermon.

Kathy Pregitzer (M, W, Fe 36-45): I found it easier to be drawn into their stories and it was more quickly apparent how my situation in life could benefit from their experiences.

Cathy Kerr (M, W, Fe 46-54): I don't have a preference.

Judy Watts (M, W, Fe 55-65): The life stories were interesting and tuned into problems in today's world. There was much I could relate to in my own and friends' lives.

4. Often Pastor Tim filled in the blanks to the story line specifically given in the text. Did this help you to understand or apply the main message of the morning? Did it distract you?

Jeannie Couper (M, W, Fe 46-54): Helpful to better understand the times. Was thankful for many sources used, appreciated language, clarified, survey.

Kathy Pregitzer (M, W, Fe 36-45): I found it helped to listen but needed to remind myself that this was only a possibility, not a scriptural text.

Cathy Kerr (M, W, Fe 46-54): I don't like "filling in the blanks" very much if it's not there. A lot of filling in sticks with you and may not be true.

Judy Watts (M, W, Fe 55-65): I like all the historic information. It helped to understand the culture of the day and separate what was or wasn't an important part of the story. It did not distract but added to the portrait.

5. Is there anything that you found particularly irritating or helpful in the sermons?

Jeannie Couper (M, W, Fe 46-54): Perhaps too many examples in trying to make a point. Pauses are helpful. Examples from real life are helpful. Application of principle to our lives wonderful.

Kathy Pregitzer (M, W, Fe 36-45): The commitment prayer at the end – now how do I take this home and apply it to my life. Current day statistics and intros helped hammer home its relevance; I was more distracted in the last one for some reason.

Cathy Kerr (M, W, Fe 46-54): I felt they were delivered in a way that I could remember what the truths were that I needed to learn.

Judy Watts (M, W, Fe 55-65): There was nothing irritating. I did feel that these were highly personal sermons and touched difficult issues. They taught some very hard lessons on what to expect as Christians.

6. *How would you rate this series of sermons as it relates to your life personally if 1 was “not very helpful or interesting” and 10 was “extremely helpful and interesting.” Why?*

Jeannie Couper (M, W, Fe 46-54): Entire series or series of 4 we listened to? Five mostly interesting, food for thought. Not always applicable. These four sermons enjoyable at 10. Least liked Widow of Zarephath.

Kathy Pregitzer (M, W, Fe 36-45): 9. Again, the real-life situations and the plausible emotional and thought-processes occurring made it easier for me to connect to the lessons they are imparting.

Cathy Kerr (M, W, Fe 46-54): 10. I related to a lot of the situations, people, truths, I found them simple yet profound. Direct, but not boring. I came away with some very specific help for my life.

Judy Watts (M, W, Fe 55-65): 9. I found the lessons helpful. They really targeted issues and our personal relationships with Jesus Christ. I found myself looking at some things differently.

Focus Group #2 SHORT WRITTEN RESPONSES

1. This series has been based largely on Biblical narrative (stories) in which a woman was the main character or personality in the story. If you are a woman do you relate and understand the biblical story better if the central figure is a woman? If you are a man does this fact detract from your understanding of the story? Why?

Gerard DeMatteo (M, W, Ma 46-54): Subjects of women or on women did not detract in any way from relating to the sermons. They were very poignant to my situation. Each message led me to have a mental and emotional response of worship.

Judy Gaglioti (S, W, Fe 36-45): I really focused on the actions/reactions of the people involved, not if they are male or female.

Joann LaBrunda (D, W, Fe 46-54): Coming mostly from a male-centered background, I am just beginning to feel comfortable with women as main characters.

Alia Roufaeal (D, W, Fe 36-45): I could relate and understand the biblical story better if the central figure is a woman.

Anthony Holden (M, W, Ma 27-35): No. It was interesting to hear some different stories. That helped show familiar ideas from a new point of view. Other than the story of Abigail, the actual scriptures were used very little so they did not matter to my understanding the sermon.

Jennifer Holden (M, W, Fe 27-35): Sometimes...I think it depends on the particular character. As a woman I can relate to basic "woman" things, but when the character has experienced things I have not, I can just guess how she must have felt, etc.

Mike Pregitzer (M, W, Ma 36-45): No. For example, I could relate strongly to the story of Leah. Tim did not have to retell the story from a man's perspective ("Lee") in order for me to understand the application to my life.

Wilfredo Perez (M, H, Ma 46-54): No, not detracted - the stories are about relationships - person-to-person - Jesus to the women - God to his people.

Horace Derrick (M, B, Ma 36-45): As a man, I don't think it detracted from my understanding. However, in 1 or 2 occasions, I wondered if he tried too hard to empathize with female listeners.

2. How did you feel about listening to a series of messages on women?

Gerard DeMatteo (M, W, Ma 46-54): At first I felt, this is going to be a difficult job for Tim to do. The message content and application was great! In spite of the difficulties I was interested in the subject matter.

Judy Gaglioti (S, W, Fe 36-45): I enjoyed hearing the faith and various actions of a woman represented as well as God's reactions to them.

Joann LaBrunda (D, W, Fe 46-54): At first I was not terribly interested although that would not stop me from coming. As I listened to each story, I found I could apply something to my own life and relationship with God and with others.

Alia Roufaeal (D, W, Fe 36-45): I was looking forward to the series of messages on women since from my cultural background a woman is not given the importance she deserves.

Anthony Holden (M, W, Ma 27-35): I was excited to learn about women showing godly character. This is not something I grew up seeing or hearing about. I was disappointed that the main points were very generic, basic ones just told after the women's stories were explained.

Jennifer Holden (M, W, Fe 27-35): I really enjoyed it. Abigail was my favorite. I love to hear about these ordinary women who were used by God to do incredible things. It inspires me. It also reminds me that women are just as important as men in history.

Mike Pregitzer (M, W, Ma 36-45): My reaction to both the announcement and the series was positive. I was not concerned that the preaching would not be interesting. However, I was a bit surprised how applicable it was to my life as a man.

Wilfredo Perez (M, H, Ma 46-54): Didn't really focus on the fact that the character in the story was a "woman." They were real people used by God to accomplish His purposes in human events with the goal of reconciliation.

Horace Derrick (M, B, Ma 36-45): I actually looked forward to it, and wasn't disappointed.

3. How did you find listening to sermons drawn from people's life stories rather than from the letters by Paul or from the Psalms?

Gerard DeMatteo (M, W, Ma 46-54): I am more naturally drawn to more didactic, Pauline types of teaching, but I enjoy sermons on people and enjoy them when they are done well. Often sermons on people are reduced to teaching which loses the power and subtly that is in the text. Tim did not do that.

Judy Gaglioti (S, W, Fe 36-45): I enjoy hearing from all the Bible. Hearing personal stories and reactions can illustrate examples that would encourage reactions to a situation.

Joann LaBrunda (D, W, Fe 46-54): Listening to people's life stories made it easier to apply or relate to a sermon either personally or through another's similar situation. More emotional.

Alia Roufaeal (D, W, Fe 36-45): Even though the letters from Paul and the Psalms are very helpful, listening to sermons drawn to people's life stories were more helpful to learn from and apply to our lives.

Anthony Holden (M, W, Ma 27-35): This more personal point of view was easier to relate to than the conceptual/theological perspective often seen in the epistles.

Jennifer Holden (M, W, Fe 27-35): Personally... I find them easier to listen to. They are more interesting because the story was about a real person and their encounters with God and how God used them. It's more personal. I also think Tim really gets your attention when preaching those. He speaks with such passion, compassion, and emotion.

Mike Pregitzer (M, W, Ma 36-45): I could definitely relate to the story more easily. Could often see myself in the characters.

Wilfredo Perez (M, H, Ma 46-54): The biblical stories are biographies - examples of God and faith in action. There are theological undertones which surfaced upon reflection of the message.

Horace Derrick (M, B, Ma 36-45): I actually like them both, maybe a slight edge to those drawn from people's life stories.

4. Often Pastor Tim “filled in the blanks” to the story line specifically given in the text. Did this help you to understand or apply the main message of the morning? Did it distract you?

Gerard DeMatteo (M, W, Ma 46-54): It helped greatly. Although, one was not convincing (character of the woman caught in adultery; also text issue), the rest were believable and helpful. Very helpful!!

Judy Gaglioti (S, W, Fe 36-45): It is helpful to hear background information. It adds more meaning to the story.

Joann LaBrunda (D, W, Fe 46-55): I found it to be helpful in understanding the message. All the “extras” were told from the heart without extra or confusing detail. All seemed to follow sequentially.

Alia Roufaeal (D, W, Fe 36-45): The “filled in the blanks” were helpful to apply the main message to life. It was good because it was relating the message to what is happening in the present.

Anthony Holden (M, W, Ma 27-35): I love knowing the context - cultural, political, etc. to scripture. I think it is essential to properly understanding these writings, I like that he gives references, however, see [answer to] #5

Jennifer Holden (M, W, Fe 27-35): It usually helped a lot. In the sermon about the widow of Zarephath it got a little too confusing.

Mike Pregitzer (M, W, Ma 36-45): While I found this engaging, I also at times found it distracting. I would want for Tim to say something like, “The text does not say this, but these things could have happened this way.” If he didn’t it bothered me.

Wilfredo Perez (M, H, Ma 46-54): No, the “fill in the blanks” typically opened my understanding to the topic for the sermon.

Horace Derrick (M, B, Ma 36-45): It helped, though at times this caused him to take a while to get to the “message.” However, it was never boring while I waited...

5. Is there anything that you found particularly irritating or helpful in the sermons?

Gerard DeMatteo (M, W, Ma 46-54): Irritating: the emotional level is usually high. On a scale of 1 to 10, usually 8 to 10. I sometimes felt Tim was ranting. Helpful: historical background, relevant intros, descriptions, the big idea was clear and memorable.

Judy Gaglioti (S, W, Fe 36-45): Background information was helpful.

Joann LaBrunda (D, W, Fe 46-54): Getting to the point a little more quickly. Occasionally, his voice would drop making it difficult to hear and repetition of “you know” sometimes bothered me. On the whole, all were presented with feeling.

Alia Roufaeal (D, W, Fe 36-45): When it was mentioned that faith can be contagious especially when we have no faith is so true. It should be that it is always helpful to talk to a Christian when going through a tough time. Seeing someone else’s faith helps to put us back on track and helps us to work on getting our faith back.

Anthony Holden (M, W, Ma 27-35): They were much too long for me. There was too much repetition and explanation for me. These are important in appropriate amounts but other than Abigail I was lost - mentally bored and thinking of other things - long before the message was even presented. The linguistic insights were very good. Statistics were very insightful, too. I don’t care for shouting at times the sermon is so intense. That feels...salesman-like.

Jennifer Holden (M, W, Fe 27-35): I love Pastor Tim as a preacher. I find his sermons inspiring, exciting, entertaining, useful, and easy to relate to. My only complaint is the length. They really do get a little long. I start to fade the last 10 - 15 minutes.

Mike Pregitzer (M, W, Ma 36-45): Irritating is a tough word. But as I mentioned in #4, I wanted Tim to emphasize that he was indeed “filling in the blanks.” If he didn’t I was uncomfortable. Helpful: Explanations of the language subtleties. For example, in

the story of the adulterous woman. The word “writing” when Jesus was writing in the dirt.

Wilfredo Perez (M, H, Ma 46-54): I found Pastor’s framing of the context of the culture (e.g., women of that time), geography, etc. helpful in understanding the text and its meaning.

Horace Derrick (M, B, Ma 36-45): I can’t say I found anything irritating. Each sermon had very clear messages that were helpful.

6. How would you rate this series of sermons as it relates to your life personally if 1 was “not very helpful or interesting” and 10 was “extremely helpful and interesting.” Why?

Gerard DeMatteo (M, W, Ma 46-54): 9 - Each message informed me intellectually and moved me emotionally. Message on Abigail was very insightful concerning submission. I can remember most of the main ideas of each sermon. I was often led to worship. Overall, great messages.

Judy Gaglioti (S, W, Fe 36-45): 10. I feel each message illustrated basic Christian values - forgiveness, faith, God’s love. They were helpful in showing the confidence and trust of the person involved.

Joann LaBrunda (D, W, Fe 46-54): Widow of Zarephath - 10. Being divorced and feeling like a single-parent; asking where is God? Abigail – 10. She always seemed to be trying to limit the amount of hurt or damage. Leah – 10. Recently understanding all wholeness comes from God alone. Woman caught in sin – 5. Often try to catch myself looking for good in others rather than “sin nature.”

Alia Roufaeal (D, W, Fe 36-45): The series was very helpful and interesting. I rate it as at least 9. A lot of what was said made me see that other women went through tough times and were in difficult situations. I could relate to Leah who was looking for her husband’s love and did not get it, no matter how hard she tried. I could relate to Abigail who was married to a fool, who was not wise in his actions.

Anthony Holden (M, W, Ma 27-35): 3. - Abigail was interesting and the end of the Festival of Booths was good too, but I got about 30 total minutes of interest out of about 200 total. I just have a lot of trouble focusing and following.

Jennifer Holden (M, W, Fe 27-35): I would definitely give it a 10. I’m not just saying that, either. I think the whole series on women has been very interesting. I guess I’m not really sure how it wouldn’t be helpful. I think we can learn so much about God and his character by reading about the people in the Bible and their experiences.

Mike Pregitzer (M, W, Ma 36-45): 9 - Interestingly, I didn't learn much about women (which is kind of what I expected going in). I learned more about people in general, God and myself specifically.

Wilfredo Perez (M, H, Ma 46-54): 10 - very helpful and interesting in presenting a continuity of theme: faith, trust, active in response to God's calling.

Horace Derrick (M, B, Ma 36-45): 8 - there were strong messages in each that would apply to both men and women, almost equally.

Focus Group #3 SHORT WRITTEN RESPONSES

1. This series has been based largely on Biblical narrative (stories) in which a woman was the main character or personality in the story. If you are a woman do you relate and understand the biblical story better if the central figure is a woman? If you are a man does this fact detract from your understanding of the story? Why?

Rasheeda Tacoronte (M, WI, Fe 36-45): Yes. Because being a woman you tend to have a better understanding of what the woman is feeling.

Ralph Tolomieri (M, W, Ma 46-54): No. A woman being the main character is to me the same as a man because the lesson learned for me is a spiritual message. It applies to everyone!

Bob Orsillo (M, W, Ma 65+): [no written answer supplied for this question]

Santiago Tacoronte (M, H, Ma 36-45): No. Because there's always something you can learn from these women in the sermons because of the way God used these women, plus there was a man involved.

Blossom Gonzalez (M, A, Fe 36-45): It doesn't matter to me if the central figure is a woman or man. It is the circumstances and situations in the story that mattered most.

2. How did you feel about listening to a series of messages on women?

Rasheeda Tacoronte (M, WI, Fe 36-45): It was really uplifting, especially there were days where I was feeling down, I listened to the sermon on Leah and it really helped me.

Ralph Tolomieri (M, W, Ma 46-54): I enjoyed it. Again, I do not see differences between men and women in spiritual growth. Maybe life's experiences are different but emotional spiritual relationships with God is the same.

Bob Orsillo (M, W, Ma 65+): My feeling took me back to what I was years ago. In my words, in my way. Other times it made me feel sorry for the women in the message.

Santiago Tacoronte (M, H, Ma 36-45): It's always good knowing a woman's viewpoint and how God used them. Either by their actions or example.

Blossom Gonzalez (M, A, Fe 36-45): When I first heard the announcement, I thought it would sound biased or could be one-sided having a guy studying women's behaviors. I was looking forward to hear how Pastor Tim would deliver the series. Starting from the first message, I changed what I thought, they weren't biased at all.

3. How did you find listening to sermons drawn from people's life stories rather than from the letters by Paul or from the Psalms?

Rasheeda Tacoronte (M, WI, Fe 36-45): When I listen to sermons drawn from people's life-story, I can create a better picture in my mind.

Ralph Tolomieri (M, W, Ma 46-54): I like it. It is personal. EASIER to understand because many times I relate in a hands-on experience. For me it is a clearer learning awareness.

Bob Orsillo (M, W, Ma 65+): Very gratifying. The way you presented the message I got angry at myself and sometimes grateful.

Santiago Tacoronte (M, H, Ma 36-45): I like listening to people's life story. I relate to them better as far as putting myself in that situation.

Blossom Gonzalez (M,A,Fe 36-45): The messages were all clear; even with the letters by Paul or Psalms stuff all have stories in them, so I guess I'll say it made no difference to me.

4. Often Pastor Tim "filled in the blanks" to the story line specifically given in the text. Did this help you to understand or apply the main message of the morning? Did it distract you?

Rasheeda Tacoronte (M, WI, Fe 36-45): By Pastor Tim filling in the blanks, it gives you a better understanding of the text.

Ralph Tolomieri (M, W, Ma 46-54): It helps. More colorful pictures, using words the more I understand. It brings the story to life. Like watching a movie.

Bob Orsillo (M, W, Ma 65+): It was very helpful. Today, it brings me closer to my wife, more understanding of her. You gave me highs and lows.

Santiago Tacoronte (M, H, Ma 36-45): It helps me because I do the same thing when I am listening to him - I fill in the blanks.

Blossom Gonzalez (M, A, Fe 36-45): The added descriptions and scenario I believe helped me understand what were being conveyed, they also make the olden customs or behaviors relate to the present.

5. Is there anything that you found particularly irritating or helpful in the sermons?

Rasheeda Tacoronte (M, WI, Fe 36-45): All of the sermons were very helpful especially the one with Abigail. It tells me that we should be submissive to our husbands but we do not have to agree with everything.

Ralph Tolomieri (M, W, Ma 46-54): NO. NO. NO. And NO! I like simplicity in sermons, short and sweet! Not filled with complicated dates and historical facts!

Bob Orsillo (M, W, Ma 65+): It makes think first in must [sic] case it to me to be more humble to my wife.

Santiago Tacoronte (M, H, Ma 36-45): Helpful, realize that God is so forgiving that it's hard to understand because I don't deserve it.

Blossom Gonzalez (M,A,Fe 36-45): I like how Pastor Tim delivered his sermons, how he uses common phrases that we normally use on [sic] our daily conversations are very helpful.

6. How would you rate this series of sermons as it relates to your life personally if 1 was “not very helpful or interesting” and 10 was “extremely helpful and interesting”? Why?

Rasheeda Tacoronte (M, WI, Fe 36-45): 10 - These sermons helped me in my daily walk with the Lord.

Ralph Tolomieri (M, W, Ma 46-54): 10 - How can someone NOT relate to people's lives? All of these stories end with relationships with God. I always connect with these stories. It brings me to a greater understanding of my Lord.

Bob Orsillo (M, W, Ma 65+): Sometime I did not hear you. But in general you were great. I give you a 9.

Santiago Tacoronte (M, H, Ma 36-45): 8 - realize in the sermon that God spoke to these women but the men in these stories had a lot of things to do whether it was good or bad. So I walk away with the good things to apply to my life.

Blossom Gonzalez (M, A, Fe 36-45): About 9 - most of them are helpful although some gave me uncertainties if I could be tactful or prepared enough to see the difference.

Focus Group # 4
SHORT WRITTEN RESPONSES

1. This series has been based largely on Biblical narrative (stories) in which a woman was the main character or personality in the story. If you are a woman do you relate and understand the biblical story better if the central figure is a woman? If you are a man does this fact detract from your understanding of the story? Why?

April Garuccio (M, W, Fe 46-54): As a woman, I found this series to be very personal in nature and comforting to know that women of the Bible have experienced many of the hardships that women of today suffer.

Josh Goolcharan (S, WI, Ma 13-18): At first it distracted me because I think, “I’m not a woman, what does it have to do with me”? But then after thinking about it I realized that there was something that could be applied to my life.

Margaret Waddington (M, W, Fe 36-45): Maybe slightly, but not a big difference between male and female characters. I think I could relate better to the characters of Leah and Abigail, better than a typical man would.

Carol Dyson (M, W, Fe 65+): As a woman I could relate to some of the stories, but I did feel that the lessons learned could be applied to the lives of both male and female. God’s love knows no gender.

Todd Reilly (S, W, Ma 36-45): It made no difference to me - people are people. I felt the messages were applicable to the human condition, not just necessarily to women.

Dennis Alabi (M, BA, Ma 36-45): Initially thought the sermon/series might not really be useful to me. I thought the message(s) were tailored towards women and men, we just mere attendees or listeners [sic]. As the series progressed, I changed my thought and became apprehensive.

Rosemary Weidner (M, H, Fe 36-45): Yes, because he’s talking about women.

Fernando Rodriguez (M, H, Ma 45-54): Absolutely not. I actually enjoyed all four tapes - some were my first time listening to them.

2. How did you feel about listening to a series of messages on women?

April Garuccio (M, W, Fe 46-54): I thought the series was GREAT. I had no idea, when first informed of “A Woman God Can Use” who/what would be spoken of.

Josh Goolcharan (S, WI, Ma 13-18): At first I thought it was gonna be a waste of time, but then I realized that the sermons could apply to my life.

Margaret Waddington (M, W, Fe 36-45): I was pretty indifferent when I first heard about it but I've been enjoying the series because I've gotten to know some of the characters a lot better and I've learned a different perspective to stories I've heard before.

Carol Dyson (M, W, Fe 65+): I like listening to the messages on women since the lessons learned were very helpful in my walk with the Lord. They reinforced many of the things I already knew, but it is good for these words to be a reminder to what God wants us to do.

Todd Reilly (S, W, Ma 36-45): At first, I felt like it would be dealing with women's issues, and if you're a man, how to deal with your wife. As I'm a single man, I was concerned that the services would be irrelevant to me, but they turned out to be more of the human condition and what that particular woman was going through; not women in general.

Dennis Alabi (M, BA, Ma 36-45): I actually did not think that the series was addressed or meant for women. The delivery was inclusive and hardly gave any indication it was meant for women.

Rosemary Weidner (M, H, Fe 36-45): Was the Bible, people's life stories, told by our Pastor like we are living at the time. And he compared with our life today, I love it!!

Fernando Rodriguez (M, H, Ma 45-54): Indifferent at first. However, as I listened, I became very interested, intrigued and glad I took the time to do this.

3. How did you find listening to sermons drawn from people's life stories rather than from the letters by Paul or from the Psalms?

April Garuccio (M, W, Fe 46-54): People's stories are very relatable, being able to touch the many weaknesses and sins we as men and women share.

Josh Goolcharan (S, WI, Ma 13-18): I thought it was good because it gave me an example of the principles and helped me understand it better.

Margaret Waddington (M, W, Fe 36-45): I prefer hearing stories drawn from life stories, in general. However, Tim does an excellent job relating other scriptures to the issues faced in our everyday lives.

Carol Dyson (M, W, Fe 65+): I found these stories to be very interesting and more realistic as many of the things that happened could be applied to today's world. Some things don't change, unfortunately.

Todd Reilly (S, W, Ma 36-45): As long as it's from Scripture and not overly embellished (see #4) I had/have no problem with it.

Dennis Alabi (M, BA, Ma 36-45): Personally, I have always been fascinated by sermons on Bible characters. So this wasn't strange to me nor caught me by surprise.

Rosemary Weidner (M, H, Fe 36-45): [It] was great [for] Pastor Tim take his time to prepare a sermon of messages on women. I learn, on my daily walk as a woman.

Fernando Rodriguez (M, H, M a45-54): I actually found it fun, that's one of my attractions and why I love the Bible – the stories.

4. Often Pastor Tim “filled in the blanks” to the story line specifically given in the text. Did this help you to understand or apply the main message of the morning? Did it distract you?

April Garuccio (M, W, Fe 46-54): “Filling in the blanks” grabs attention. Sparks interest. This helped to understand and bring the stories into a more everyday-sense.

Josh Goolcharan (S, WI, Ma 13-18): I thought it helped because it helped me better understand where these people were coming from - Grabbed my attention.

Margaret Waddington (M,W,Fe 36-45): It usually helps but I sometimes feel that Tim gets carried away with this and find myself wishing on occasion that he would embellish less (i.e., not draw it out as opposed to not doing so at all). I find that a certain amount of “filling in the blanks” is helpful to understand the story and drive home the message.

Carol Dyson (M, W, Fe 65+): Yes, it did very much help me to understand the story better and the message became clearer to me. I feel that Tim's ability to “ad lib” per say holds a person's interest and the message comes across better.

Todd Reilly (S, W, Ma 36-45): I felt it was mostly helpful and illuminating. Be careful it's not overdone or speculative. Be careful about using statistics. Consider bias of the source when using them to buttress your arguments.

Dennis Alabi (M, BA, Ma 36-45): All the blanks - the young anxious Pharisee trying t get ahead, Nabal the fool and the other descriptions actually reinforced the message. Never was a distraction.

Rosemary Weidner (M, H, Fe 36-45): Helped me.

Fernando Rodriguez (M, H, Ma 45-54): In this series there was an occasion when I was distracted; the “widow of Zarephath.” Pastor Tim's introduction took a while in getting to the heart of the story I felt.

5. Is there anything that you found particularly irritating or helpful in the sermons?

April Garuccio (M, W, Fe 46-54): The helpful side was how God honored these women of such hardships through their faith.

Josh Goolcharan (S, WI, Ma 13-18): I thought it was helpful that at the beginning of the sermons he tried to give an example of the story that could happen today.

Margaret Waddington (M, W, Fe 36-45): I did not find anything particularly irritating. I found several things helpful. I always appreciate the historical context. I like the current day story that starts the sermons and grabs my attention. I like getting emotionally involved in the story (which Tim's delivery does for me) and I like how it always built to the main message that Tim was attempting to convey (which could be summarized in a sentence or two).

Carol Dyson (M, W, Fe 65+): I found these sermons helpful in reinforcing my knowledge and in some cases, teaching me how God wants me to react to some of the situations presented in these stories.

Todd Reilly (S, W, Ma 36-45): Nothing stands out.

Dennis Alabi (M, BA, Ma 36-45): The delivery was uncompromising. The content or delivery, context and background descriptions were fascinating. The descriptions were perfect and the language was fearless.

Rosemary Weidner (M, H, Fe 36-45): No. I always enjoy Pastor Tim's sermons. The tape #4 was little hard to me to understand, but when he start to go Biblical, I got it. Possibly because different *idioma* (language).

Fernando Rodriguez (M, H, Ma 45-54): I found the whole series helpful. My feelings ranged from embarrassment, depression, enlightened, excited and joyful (not irritating).

6. How would you rate this series of sermons as it relates to your life personally if 1 was "not very helpful or interesting" and 10 was "extremely helpful and interesting"? Why?

April Garuccio (M, W, Fe 46-54): I would rate this series a 10. Many (especially Abigail) was so painful to hear. And comforting at the same time.

Josh Goolcharan (S, WI, Ma 13-18): 7 because I found that most of the sermons were helpful and could be applied to my life.

Margaret Waddington (M, W, Fe 36-45): I always find something of help and interest in all of Tim's sermons, and this was no exception. I would rate these sermons as a 9 or a 10. Even if I couldn't relate directly to the Bible story character, I could always learn something from the central message (e.g., stepping out in faith, changing focus, repentance, etc.).

Carol Dyson (M, W, Fe 65+): I give this series a 10! I found this series to be very helpful to me as well as interesting. Pastor Tim has the ability to take a small verse and make it into a story with a strong message that sticks with you. I also learned some ways to try to help a few people in my family to “see the light” and let them know how God wants us to live.

Todd Reilly (S, W, Ma 36-45): 6.5 - When the sermons were “woman-focused” (at times they were) I tended to tune out. When it was more human-condition-focused, I felt I could apply it.

Dennis Alabi (M, BA, Ma 36-45): Sermons in the series will all be ranked 10. Cannot really take anything away or add to the subject. The sermons reminded me of Chuck Swindol’s sermons. The sermons were really helpful because the characters of the male individual were more of a lesson for me.

Rosemary Weidner (M, H, Fe 36-45): Was interesting (tape #2 Leah). I was living Leah’s life. I tried to apply her history to our life as a woman.

Fernando Rodriguez (M, H, Ma 45-54): Very close to a 10 - I loved them (8-9).

Focus Group #5
SHORT WRITTEN RESPONSES

1. This series has been based largely on Biblical narrative (stories) in which a woman was the main character or personality in the story. If you are a woman do you relate and understand the biblical story better if the central figure is a woman? If you are a man does this fact detract from your understanding of the story? Why?

Tina Anton (M, W, Fe 36-45): No. I think that a message is to be taken different by male or female if it specifically is talking about male roles verses female roles.

Michael Anton (M, W, Ma, 46-54): As a man I was able to relate regardless. I find that our hearts can be or relate in a very similar way regardless (man or woman).

Jessica Rimelis (S, W, Fe 27-35): For me it made the understanding easier because I can see it from a woman's point of view – it is easy to somehow imagine myself in her shoes.

Lisa Thomas (M, W, Fe 36-45): I don't relate better if the story is a woman because the message may not be something that I'm struggling with in particular at the time. I relate best to a story or message when it involves something that I have struggled with personally.

John Marcott (M, W, Ma 46-54): Yes and No. Never thought much before about there being a difference – I've learned from the examples of Hannah, Ruth, Esther and Mary, for instance, in the past without ever seeing a difference between learning from the examples of Abraham, Moses, etc. I was able to identify with the female characters in the story - and Pastor Tim did a great job of going out of his way to make bridges into men's lives with various applications throughout sermons. However, there are many aspects of women's experiences that I want to respect their unique sensitivity to (that is beyond my experience as a man): 1) physical abuse - the intro to Abigail, Tim used an illustration about spousal abuse and quoted statistics, this is something which might be more of a common fear and experience among women, but not so to me (I have to acknowledge that they might react to the whole issue differently than I do); 2) question of submission - this whole issue probably prompted the women to the edges of their seats, it's a burning, relevant issue, which, I have to admit, I don't get emotionally roused by the mere mention of it; 3) the experience of widowhood - especially in the Ancient Near East, what that meant, the feeling of being completely destitute, of having no possibility of being able to control your own fate – that's not something I can really relate to; 4) the "ugly duckling" or ugly girl syndrome, that Pastor Tim talked about in the Leah story....honestly as a guy, I don't fully appreciate the experience that women suffer under when society places such emphasis on appearance (I think guys have it a lot easier, we can get away with our personalities and aren't judged by our looks as severely) - I understand the issue, I can relate it to different areas of my life, but honestly, I must respect that women deal with this on a much more profound level than I can appreciate; and, of course, 5) child-bearing – this uniquely woman ability, sure I can sympathize and

empathize and come alongside Leah in her pregnancy, but I can never as a man fully enter into that experience. So, yes, there is no barrier to relate to and learn from the female characters that God has given us in the Bible, but I must be honest in admitting that there are distinctly female experiences that I can try to be sensitive to, but must admit that they are foreign to my identifying fully or claiming to be able to understand with the same depth a woman could.

2. How did you feel about listening to a series of messages on women?

Tina Anton (M, W, Fe 36-45): I felt it was very interesting to learn more about how I can be better and learn more.

Michael Anton (M, W, Ma 46-54): Very interesting to see how these real life-stories can relate to woman situations today.

Jessica Rimelis (S, W, Fe 27-35): I thought that it was great – it gives a different point of view. Not so traditional.

Lisa Thomas (M, W, Fe 36-45): It was interesting to me when I was told of it. After hearing the sermons it was better than I'd expected because the messages really spoke to issues that women deal with every day and they are deep personal issues.

John Marcott (M, W, Ma 46-54): At first, I expected a series on woman's roles, so I thought to myself, "Okay, I'm gonna' be stuck here listening to a series that will only tangentially relate to me. However, once the series began – I was genuinely fascinated. Not only because it used character sketches instead of didactic passages, but also because it used lesser known figures (widow of Zarephath, Abigail, Leah, etc.) and not the predictable, expected characters (Hannah, Ruth, etc.).

3. How did you find listening to sermons drawn from people's life stories rather than from the letters by Paul or from the Psalms?

Tina Anton (M, W, Fe 36-45): I felt it was more inspiring and understood better because I would put myself in their place.

Michael Anton (M, W, Ma 46-54): Very powerful, since these were real events that happened during past events.

Jessica Rimelis (S, W, Fe 27-35): It was on a much more personal level. I felt as though I got to know each person rather well.

Lisa Thomas (M, W, Fe 36-45): It's helpful to remember the message if you remember the story and easier to remember a story than Bible text. It's very powerful and helps you to empathize with the characters – you really feel what they are feeling.

John Marcott (M, W, Ma 46-54): I love stories. Stories draw you in. The Bible is full of stories and I think for good reason – everybody loves stories. However, I very often squirm with the way Bible stories are preached on. Whereas didactic passages are often clear in intent, biblical stories do not always clearly state their intention. Very often the storytellers leave them frustratingly unresolved. Very often it is only after a very sensitive reading of the broader context are the true intents of stories understood. Also, very often the main character of the biblical storyline is God and focusing on the human characters as examples is besides the point. So, even though I love stories and love to read Bible stories, I fear that they are very often misused or used to prove points that are not necessarily the intention of the passages (in this way, they can be broadly biblical - hopefully - but not necessarily given for the reasons drawn from the stories - if that makes any sense).

4. Often Pastor Tim “filled in the blanks” to the story line specifically given in the text. Did this help you to understand or apply the main message of the morning? Did it distract you?

Tina Anton (M, W, Fe 36-45): It helps to understand. Not distracting but more interesting.

Michael Anton (M, W, Ma 46-54): It can be distracting if too much time is spent on (filling in the blanks).

Jessica Rimelis (S, W, Fe 27-35): It aids in my understanding because his filling in the blanks creates a much clearer picture.

Lisa Thomas (M, W, Fe 36-45): Helps to really hammer in the point. The colorful storytelling helps you to remember the message once you’ve left.

John Marcott (M, W, Ma 46-54): Again, I have to give a “yes” and a “no” answer to this question. Sometimes it is essential and helpful to the full appreciation of the story, at other times it can not only be distracting, but it might also draw attention away from what the biblical text is teaching. For myself, the elaborate discussion of famine conditions in the widow of Zarephath sermon was distracting. It may be because the discussion was just too long, or it may have been that the emphasis was too strong. Also, the reconstructed “possibility” (and Pastor Tim clearly stated his source before he launched into the reconstruction) of the woman caught in adultery was very distracting to me, also. I’m not sure if it was because it involved sexually related issues (which can be a distraction), or because it was so “soap opera-like” or because it rested on so many unstated inferences that I found it distracting. Pastor Tim does a great job of not only supplying necessary historical background, but also “painting” the emotional landscape of the characters and detailing the psychological inscapes of the characters. This is what brings the stories alive. However, I sometimes wonder about relying too heavily on reconstructed stories – are we guilty of adding to the biblical story aspects that the biblical author chose to leave out? Or are we accurately portraying the emotional, rhetorical “punch”?

5. Is there anything that you found particularly irritating or helpful in the sermons?

Tina Anton (M, W, Fe 36-45): [supplied no written answer]

Michael Anton (M, W, Ma 46-54): Sometimes the analogies can be too long and take away from the main message.

Jessica Rimelis (S, W, Fe 27-35): It is always extremely helpful when Pastor Tim will relate something to everyday life.

Lisa Thomas (M, W, Fe 36-45): It is particularly helpful when the cultural norms of the day are provided - that helps you to understand the true significance of what is happening.

John Marcott (M, W, Ma 46-54): Helpful: Pastor Tim has the gift of being able to not only deftly tell a great story, he is distinctly able, and this I particularly appreciate, to bring ancient stories and truths to bear on today. He not only does this with practical applications, but also by creative uses of language - certain turns of phrases (metaphorical lines, employing colloquial language to retell details, substituting modern equivalents, etc.), and giving modern scenarios that parallel the issue at hand. That's what packs punch in what he says. An excellent communicator, he can make clear simple, basic points as well as profound, powerful spiritual truth. Irritating (I wouldn't use that word - things that could be tweaked?): I found the sermons long. Pastor Tim packs so much information, images, energy and ideas into a sermon that for this to last 50 minutes (I think most were this long) was a little taxing on the attention span. I also find a need for more variation in passion level, loudness level. I like the fluctuation in his voice level when it dips quietly. I think he can make better use of variation – loud very often. A very minor suggestion.

6. How would you rate this series of sermons as it relates to your life personally if 1 was “not very helpful or interesting” and 10 was “extremely helpful and interesting”? Why?

Tina Anton (M, W, Fe 36-45): I gave it an 8. It was helpful because it made me understand what God expects from us. Also it made me understand that we need to react different with every situation. These women were very good examples.

Michael Anton (M, W, Ma 46-54): 9-10. All if not most of Pastor Tim's messages have been extremely helpful to me. I appreciate his passion and level of energy that he brings to his sermons.

Jessica Rimelis (S, W, Fe 27-35): I would say an 8 - it was extremely interesting and well done - yet does not directly relate to my life. Yet - the lessons in these stories can easily be applied to other areas of my life.

Lisa Thomas (M, W, Fe 36-45): 10 - Abigail - sometimes being submissive to husband is not necessarily listening to everything they say without question. For example, if they are a “fool” as David was [sic] - being submissive can mean putting yourself in danger to do what’s right. Being submissive doesn’t mean not to think your own independent thoughts.

John Marcott (M, W, Ma 46-54): 10 - extremely insightful, interesting and powerful sermons. Powerful “case studies.”

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP TRANSCRIPTS

The following discussions involved 32 people who are regular attendees of the West Essex Baptist Church in Livingston, New Jersey. All five of the focus groups were moderated by Associate Pastor John Marcott. The participants were first asked to provide short answers to six questions (Appendix B), followed by a discussion time. The meetings lasted anywhere from 1 ½ to 1 ¾ hours. The five focus groups meetings occurred over the course of a three week period in August of 2004.

The following transcripts are, for the most part, a word for word rendering of the original discussions. Since Pastor John Marcott's introductory remarks were sometimes extended and introductory in nature, much of that dialogue was left out. Sentence structure and grammar are not always neat, since conversational language rarely is. There are a number of run-on sentences. It must be noted that there were also some people involved who speak and write English as a second language.

In some spots of the transcript the reader will see a series of dots.....which means either that there was a long pause, that the speakers voice dropped too low to hear on the tape recorders stationed on either end of the table, that the transmission was garbled or it meant that the speaker changed the direction of their conversation abruptly. The nature of the discussion was not altered in any meaningful way by these deletions. Several times descriptive phrases were added enclosed by brackets to help the reader understand more clearly what was going on and what was being said at the discussion table.

Focus Group #1

Tuesday, 8/3/04

Participants: Cathy Kerr, Ray Kerr, Judy Watts, Kathy Pregitzer, Jeannie Couper.

1. Pastor John Marcott: If you're a woman, do you relate to and understand the biblical story better if the central figure is a woman?

Jeannie: Not always; not necessarily. For me, I'm trying to listen to the global story, not just this one individual. I didn't get sucked into, "golly, that person is just like me, I can really learn something huge here." No. I wasn't staying in that place. Didn't matter if the central figure was a woman or not. Pastor Tim wove in the man, the family, communities quite nicely. That the problem was the woman's.....sometimes, not always. Like even Abigail really was about the wacky spouse instead of her problem. Ultimately it came around to Abigail's problem cause' she was going to stand out there and do something wrong. A lot of times He wove it all around, so...

Kathy: I have to agree with Jeannie. I like hearing stories about people's lives, so, it was nice about women but it didn't matter to me. It wasn't.....about a course on women that I couldn't wait to come and hear.....the other pieces of the story were just as important.....

Cathy: I said no, it doesn't matter if it's a story of a woman.....I could maybe understand it better. I feel as long as the biblical truth is taken out in any story then that's the main thing for me. For me, probably, the style of preaching, verse by verse hits me more comfortably than who the story is about. If the delivery is done in a very orderly way, and the minister's preaching in a way that it flows the way I like it, then I can really connect with it, but the gender of the people, the story, make no difference to me at all.

Judy: Gender doesn't make any difference to me either. It really didn't make a difference to me. Most of these I kinda' listened to what the heart of the message was, cause there seemed to be a point with every one of them and a lot of cases, it didn't really matter if it was male or female. I liked the stories but it really didn't matter.

Ray: It didn't bother me either. You're there to learn and I did learn.....I thought Pastor Tim did an excellent job especially getting the background and everything to get as close as you could make it to the way it was at the time...and we can learn something from it, that's the key thing. Be a better Christian.....But as far as man or woman.....there's always something to learn, doesn't matter which side of the fence you're on.

Pastor John: Good. Let me ask you something based on what Kathy said. When you heard beforehand about a series on women in the Bible.....let's say we sent out a postcard stating WEBC will be featuring an eight-part series on women in the Bible...how would you react to it?

Kathy: And that's funny.....I actually thought it was kinda' cool. I wasn't running saying "it's about women, I have to come," but I like the other pieces of the story.....about people's lives, thoughts, emotions, spiritual struggles they went through. So for me I think even if it were stories on the lesser known men, not a David, Moses, Noah series, it's Hosea, or Jabez, like these other guys who get a couple lines like these women do, so, I liked that it was grouped together. Like we're going to focus on this but I had the sense more that it would be more about their lives and not just the exploits and how to.....I mean the Epistles and Psalms had great things too but I had a sense that it would be more about personal stories that I could relate to better, so for me, men or women, I would have had the same interests.

Pastor John: Right, characters.....whatever.....

Jeannie: There was one week when Pastor Tim did a sermon on a female, I couldn't remember the female, but I couldn't relate to that sermon one bit.....I didn't know where he was going with it. I got "zero" out this today. Then the following week, there was something substantial, I got something out of it.....and said "thank you Tim, I got something out of it today." If I got something in the mail with an announcement, I would have said "YUK"; I would have not voluntarily participated in it. I was surprised there was enough women to do, I really was. I was surprised he made interesting sermons out of some of these women, and that was exciting for me. I mean I never heard of Abigail before so that was a fabulous story for me.

Ray: Yeah.....it makes you focus on something, where we just probably read it and not focus on it.

Jeannie: Yes, 'cause he fills in all the blanks. The background.....

Ray: I guess God put it there for a reason.

Pastor John: How about you too?

Cathy: I think it was good coming out of the expository study of James. It was very heavy in the pulpit and in the care groups.....when I heard that we were going to do a women of the Bible (series).....I was excited we are doing something different. I've done a Bible study before at Longhill Chapel doing women of the Old Testament and New Testament and it was then I realized there were some really, really interesting woman in both parts of the Bible, so when we found out about this, I was very excited about it. I was thinking it would take a bit long dealing with Ruth or Deborah etc.....getting all the women but Pastor Tim picked good ones and I was very excited. It was a very refreshing change for (me) coming out of a rigid but beautiful, beautiful time.....

Judy: When it was said a study of woman.....it wasn't the women I expected.....I was expecting the big name stars.....like some of the men. It wasn't. Most of them don't even have names. For me, I just thought it was excellent. I don't really think it was the

people that it was, it was the problems were the focus and they relate to men or women. They did paint a very good picture of the life they lived and the culture and everything, so you did understand where they were coming from. But as to a study of women, it surprised me. They weren't the women I expected them to be.

Jeannie: I thought it was nice. It was different.

2. Pastor John: *Did you have any reaction when you heard there was a series on women?*

Ray: I think he did a great job. Especially giving the historical background. It's almost like he's setting up a whole scene and you're actually playing out the part. You can relate to it better.

Kathy: I think it was interesting what you said before, how we just blow over these women and the background.....so many of these women are these little tiny stories that seek to not really be the focus of the story and yet we turn it, like a kaleidoscope, like OK, let's look at it this way instead, from her point of view (from her point of view, not just from Christ's reaction or how did Elijah deal with...) but who was this women and what may have brought her to where she was.

Judy: I think especially with Leah....she was always there, but that's a character who was always there but you never really look at her, but look at the life she lived...that was such an important lesson. How she had to focus on God and never was what she wanted to be. That message was really important.

Pastor John: The second question states it this way. Is there anything else that wasn't added to that last question I asked you? (in the sense of looking forward to a series on women).

Cathy: I though some of these stories were so familiar but never would get any.....on them. Pastor Tim took the time to sit down and pick these people out and give us a wonderful picture and wonderful study, like the woman at the well. Like do we know all the parts? He has the ability to pick out the points that blew me away. Especially when he said the woman at the well changed the subject....I never thought that. Pastor Tim gave me a meat and potatoes service. And I thought it was a great idea to do these women.

Jeannie: Pastor Tim made it applicable to us today. He didn't leave it back there, he made sure we understood the culture at the time, the conflicts, the positive things, the language, etc. One day, he used a word that he explained and I appreciate that.....but then, by the end, he brought it all back together for us to apply today. And he was even interdicting (?) some of that through it with some examples to things that are happening currently in our culture and our lives, and I appreciated that as well.

Pastor John: This is not a question on here.....do you think there is anything in the stories about women that you as women relate to differently or understand better than men would? Are there any experiences that the women went through that you reacted differently then men would?

Jeannie: I think yes....Mary and Martha for example. I think I relate to that differently than Matt. Yes. On one hand, it doesn't matter the gender, but if it's a female, we can put ourselves more in their position. Then, I can relate to that.

Kathy: I think a father can relate in a similar way. As a mother, from the moment you find out, you have all these hopes and dreams. I think women experience to a different intensity, maybe. She's got this baby in her arms, now my husband is really going to love me, God has heard me. She is pouring her hope and dreams in the baby. There's no commentary on Jacob's reaction to this 1st born son or subsequent sons, how thrilled he may be, etc. Seeing how the women reacted to their own children is something I can relate also too and see it differently at that point. I think for me that was one story I saw differently at that point.

Cathy: For me, I think it was the woman taken in adultery. When he was telling the story, I can just picture myself being her and felt very little focused on the man involved in the adultery situation, but I found myself almost like I can picture her being taken away, thrown in front of Jesus and having done the sin and that, I can really, in that story, I can go into her character. That was where I really slipped into her character. Where Abigail, ahh....or Lydia.....even though Lydia was my favorite story.....I didn't have quite that identification, but I felt the truth in those stories were very real. To be one with the characters, yeah, the one caught in adultery. I could feel the Pharisee's drag me right down the street.

Ray: I like the way Pastor Tim brought out the fact that you are stoned when you commit adultery. I find it amazing that one could have gone up to the Creator and actually try to have an argument with Him. It's like fools rush in.... It was good. I guess that's what makes it interesting.

Pastor John: Do you think that men and women would respond differently to the whole discussion of submission in the sermon of Abigail?

Kathy: I was thinking of that. Yeah, I got a different reaction probably than Mike. I was thinking more of being a mom.....

Jeannie: Even the example Pastor Tim used for submission for Abigail was back to Philippians and I would never have thought to have gone back there.

Cathy: I thought that was quite hard and the bravest sermons I heard anyone speak. He is to be credited to just step into a pulpit in front of people and say what he said. I'm glad he said it. What a brave thing to do. It was always one of my favorite stories in the

Bible. I never got that point that she was protecting him. I always thought she was not protecting him. She could have picked up the kids and ran away, but she didn't.

Kathy: And the fact of David's response to her was this was a Godly woman, like where did you get that, but, yeah, you're right. I have never seen it in that light.

Judy: I kind of reacted to her like the nurturing end. Like she was protecting her household even though her husband did this whole thing.....she was really responsible, that was part of the culture too.

Pastor John: Any reaction on your part to that part of submission? First of all it was a very creative thing to ask about that in this story. This is now a live wire question to every woman in this congregation. As a man, I listen to it and you just opened a can of worms [Laughter]. Like, "OK, Tim you need to get out of the corner you painted yourself into." But he did. It was funny 'cause I was thinking "OK, I don't think any women was thinking that was dangerous." Like you said, it was courageous.

3. Pastor John: *Ok, let's go to three. How do you respond to a whole series of sermons on characters and biographies as opposed to preaching from the epistles, psalms, etc?*

Jeannie: Because you don't get done in one sermon. He got the whole thing done in one sermon! I was excited! You can take and run with it. Unlike other sermons in Psalms, Paul...etc....ya touch it, next week you touch it again.....but you never feel you completed the whole task. Here you feel you completed it.

Kathy: It was more quickly apparent to me what the application would be because it was about someone else's life. Stories about human lives, even not biblical characters, you're drawn in, you're trying to learn a lesson. It was easier to find the application. The fact that he wove in current day, single mom statistics and things like that, where you say, wow, so this is a problem defined in this culture and here it is in our culture and let's go back to her story and her problem....it helped to apply it to our culture and my life. Unlike James, Paul, etc....where I would meditate on it, this is good, good memory thing, look at my notes, etc.....it doesn't seem to stick as easily as these did.

Cathy: I don't have a preference at all. I don't disagree with Kathy and Jeannie at all. It doesn't matter if we do verse by verse from Revelation "hint...Tim!" or doing a topical study on tithing or something like that. The message is getting through.

Ray: He has the gift of teaching. We can remember his teaching. That's the key, to remember it and apply it to real life and try to think as Jesus would.

Judy: I liked the biography thing. You know exactly what the point is and you can relate it to your life, friends, life, family life, etc. There was a lot of other information in there too. I wouldn't want it all the time but this was very highly personal. The problems were very personal type problems. If you didn't have that problem, a friend did, but you

can still relate. You can relate. Even the women taken in adultery, when he talked about being close to the Pharisee, you didn't have to take it from her side. We can be judgmental like them. That was like a heavy point. Even if that wasn't your problem, you feel it. We walked away convicted each week.

4. Pastor John: *OK, we already touched on this but we need to talk about it a little more. Pastor Tim gave a color commentary on these stories. Some of the stories are bare bones. He filled in the stories. Does it help to understand the passage or distracting? And, if you have any specific examples, that would help. We've already talked about the women caught in adultery for instance, that that you were drawn into to identify with.*

Cathy: That was the one I had the problem with. I brought it up to Ray. I felt that his whole presentation about the feast of tabernacles was definitely historical....I think he painted maybe too unbelievable a picture how he did it....like going to the movies or reading a novel. Like, drinking husband away on business, etc. The words Pastor Tim was giving was.....“maybe, maybe, maybe,” but am I now going to think of these two as a love story, something out of a soap opera episode.....I didn't appreciate that at all. I think his historical is great and I think there may have been clues to what he was saying, like maybe getting drunk and partying, but I think he went a little too far for me. Then I get annoyed because I'll remember this scene about this story and that's not something I want to remember about this story. I want to remember what I'm supposed to remember. So I think, for me it can get overdone and in that instance, he did overdo it.

Jeannie: For me, it was just the opposite. It came alive for me. I wasn't offended of the imagery that I was thinking. I was thinking, “how did this come to be? Was she dragged off?” Doesn't say she was raped so it was willingly participated. So that was okay for me, it gave the story substance. My question is how come the guy wasn't chased after and stoned!

Ray: Right. Women were the weaker sex so I mean have a field-day with women. If they brought the man, he would probably punch someone out and walk away, who knows.

Unidentified Person: This is hard.....[laughter].

Jeannie: Men get away with it.....women get pregnant.

Kathy: I liked the fill in the blank part but I think it was important for me to sit with my text, not so much when he was filling in the blank parts, but when he moved on. It was OK for me but in the back of my mind I was wondering how this comes across to unbelievers. I think he got more clear that we don't know exactly what happened. He gave possibilities. This is just a possibility; her emotions aren't discussed here, we don't see Leah doing this, we don't know how the reaction when Abigail didn't submit in the past. I think having that piece on both ends was helpful. It helped to draw me in.

Judy: I think it helped to make a portrait of these people.....we needed a cultural background of these people, to see where they were coming from, but then you did need to listen to the rest of the message to find out really what the point was. I just felt a very good portrait just helped. Like the widow, with famine and such. You needed to know that.

Ray: I think he did a great job on that line too. You get something out of it but he made it very interesting.

Pastor John: Anything else that you can think that was distracting?

Jeannie: Sometimes having too many examples. When he goes to the third example is too much.....you are starting to dilute the main point and it's going to get lost.

Pastor John: Elaborate on your third example statement.

Jeannie: On one of his tapes, he went through the principle that he wanted to apply, he then went and re-applied it a second time and then a third time and I was like.....stop, you don't need it again. He almost loses the point. I like his examples for the most part.....very broad.....touching on different kinds of things so that each of us, something would make an experience with that, to make it alive for us. Sometimes it's a little too much.

Cathy: I have (written) down "Too long of an introduction in the widow at Zarephath." He went from bedtime stories to lonely single women and I just remember sitting there and I felt it was going nowhere. Way too long of an introduction. I did notice in the introductions that he said that someone phoned him and he counseled someone and I was very impressed. We were just thinking of the number of people he counsels and how many people feel they can go to him and bear their souls to this young man. And then he puts it in his sermon and then you feel if you have a problem you can knock on his door or call him on the phone without letting the intimacy out. It paints the picture that of a shepherd, and you feel you can come to him and talk with him about anything. I was very, very impressed. I think if he puts this in every message, I would be thrilled.

Jeannie: I think it makes the point he is trying to stay real. It's happening today. It makes it come alive. You can take it home with you. He talks to us. He is not lecturing us. He is one of us. He asks us questions when some of us answer and it flusters him.

Kathy: I found myself more distracted then the last one, the woman caught in sin and don't know why. I got the message, got the point. I found my mind wondering. I heard the other three so it wasn't that. Don't think it was a repetition thing. Don't know if that helps.

Cathy: I waned on that one too when we listened to it the second time on CD. I remember taking notes when he did it from the pulpit and I was hooked on every word. I

found myself looking at the clock sometimes. Was it because of the time at night, was it that there was no conclusion of her being saved? I don't know if I ever picked up on that the first time. The ending was left open.....you don't know. She never asked for forgiveness, I was like, "Oh, wow....."

Ray: I'm glad though that he brought that out because sometimes we just assume.

Kathy: Again, a very similar story. Jesus says, "go and sin no more." He didn't say "you are forgiven."

Pastor John: About the women caught in adultery, is it distracting because of the "maybes" or the "sex" in the story? Or both?

Cathy: The intro was distracting. Then when he went to Jesus writing on the ground and what He was doing there. That bothered me also. I heard another interpretation on that that I thought was better. You really don't know what He did.....so.....let's get out of this, let's move on. I appreciated his commentary on it but could have taken ten minutes right out of the sermon.

Judy: I thought it was a topic that made me squirm, not so much of adultery but seeing our own sin. We are so quick to judge others and not see our own. We needed to hear it and be reminded. Some of the topics were not easy to hear.....nor talk about. Some were not popular topics and taught in a different way. The fact that He called her to repent, but she didn't ask forgiveness wasn't given. Life is like that.

Jeannie: I was glad that he said those words because I had someone in that room that needed to hear that. Ya' know what, you need to ask for His forgiveness. It just doesn't happen.

Kathy: This passage brings out a lot of things I haven't seen before.....

Pastor John: That's interesting. That could be a distraction because of familiarity of the passage. Like Jeannie said before, because in a sense, you're wide open to hear this sermon, unlike others who have heard this sermon before. Even if Tim is saying this is a possibility but it becomes a distraction because you heard other teaching on this, let's just get on.

Ray: In a sense though, I like how he speculates the way it might have been. Pastor Tim wasn't just whistling Dixie though. He had a reason why he brought those points in.

Pastor John: What's interesting is that young Christians have less of a distraction sometimes. In a sense, we should be bringing more to compare it to rather than a distraction.

5. Pastor John: *Anything else that was particularly interesting or helpful or distracting?*

Jeannie: Pastor Tim pauses and allows us to think about what he just said. He has a lot of pauses. One of the things I love about him is that he is really exciting. For me, the pause, it seems deliberate, because it seems he gives you time to get the picture of what he's talking about or the point that he's trying to make.

Judy: I picked up on the stuttering and the pausing on the tapes because I never pick it up on Sunday's.

Kathy: I find that when he pauses or emphasizes, it's a real point he is trying to make.

Ray: I think he is getting a little too dramatic...from very high too very low. Sometimes I miss the point on the very low points he speaks, and then I miss the point and then I have to put in the blanks.

Jeannie: I had that problem with the tapes. I don't seem to have that problem with real life, but my tapes were terrible.

Cathy: I would like to see him stop shouting. I think he can be just as passionate without the shouting and yelling thing. It could be a personal thing, but I've spend time at a Bible school and there was a lot of shouting and hell fire and brimstone. It took me a while to adjust when Pastor Tim would shout. I had to separate it from him not condemning you to hell; it was he was getting excited about the subject. But I still find the shouting a little over the top. If he can retain the passion and keep the levels somewhat closer together. Polarized. That could be a distraction.

Kathy: I thought another thing that was helpful was the commitment there on every sermon. Maybe because I've heard it so many times I haven't picked up on it. Now you heard it, let's commit to it.

6. Pastor John: *How did you rate the series, one to ten? Ten the best.*

Cathy: I gave it a ten. I related to a lot of situations, people, truths. I found them simple yet profound, direct and not boring. Came away with some very specific help for my life. Favorite message was Lydia, the widow second, Abigail last, and then the widow taken in adultery. For me, the fact that she put her hope in something that was going to disappoint her is truth that I needed so much in my life and the way that he brought that out. There was something in every message.....but that was the big thing for me. Like in psalms that say those who trust in the Lord will never be disappointed. But I have a problem with that in my life. Running after things and filling my life with things.....

Ray: Excellent

Judy: I gave him a nine just because just didn't want to give a ten [lots of laughs]. Very good.....I think he really targeted issues that we haven't looked at closely before. Very, very personal and very personal with your relationship with Christ, but that she didn't focus on God and that it would give her something that she would never get out of life. I never looked at it that way. Every one of them there was something. I never heard a sermon on Leah. I mean, it's always been about Jacob and Rachel. I mean, her life was so much different from others and what she had to endure. I thought it was very interesting.

Jeannie: Ya' know it was interesting....when he's doing these sermons real live time, I was wrestling with a lot of things at work and school. Every Sunday he touched something that helped me and made me make some very serious decisions.

Pastor John: So what's you're grade?

Jeannie: Oh, a ten! "A ten pastor....keep working hard there," [Laughter].

Pastor John: Now this is ten out of one hundred? [Laughter].

Jeannie: I love the way the pastor preaches. He talks to us and not preaches at us. He always brings something up that we never thought about. I like how he also uses lots of resources and experiences. He's been to a lot of places and done his homework well.

Kathy: I gave him a nine. I can't give a perfect score. It's a teacher thing (Laughter). I like the biography aspect. The story behind the story. What are the thoughts, emotions, etc...what did the people rely upon to get to the next step. He really filled it all out.

Pastor John: Anything you want to add about the series that wasn't touched on from these questionnaires?

Cathy: You mean something personal or...?

Pastor John: Anything.

Cathy: When he did the widow of Zarephath, he touched on something that made a real impact in my life because the widow had a very small amount of faith. She looked at Elijah and you know, he asks her about the bread. Maybe she looked at him instead and saw he had faith. I mean, her faith was so tiny. I had been listening to a tape about faith....stages of faith (little faith, Abrahamic faith, resting faith, etc)..... and I have been short changing myself for a couple years with that message I heard and Pastor Tim took me to a new level to realize that God will honor what little faith I have. I have been really stuck in a wrong concept of Scripture and of how Jesus my Savior valued (??), and so this was a really important thing for me.

Focus Group #2
Thursday, 8/5/04

Participants: Judy Gagliotti, Anthony Holden, Jennifer Holden, Joanne LaBrunda, Wil Perez, Alia Roufael, Mike Pregitzer, Horrace Derrick, Gerard DeMatteo.

Pastor John: Let me just remind you that there is no such thing as a throw-away comment or criticism. Anything you have to share is of significance so if someone says something profound and you think yours is not as [notable] your wrong. Uhh, we need to know if it just is that you drew a blank on it and someone else comes up with this real profound.....we still need to see and hear both of those. So I encourage you.

I am gonna' try, as we go through our discussion, its gonna' be somewhat artificial in that I'm gonna' try to get each one of your opinions even just by going around the table, as it is just that significant. We are gonna' be collecting what you wrote, but we are depending mostly on the discussion and stuff. OK? So, also I do want to, right from the start, apologize, just in case anyone was told that there was not gonna' be a writing aspect to this, because two weeks ago there wasn't. And on Tuesday someone brought this up and said I never would have agreed to this if I knew that there was a writing aspect because I am not good at that and I apologized. But it is for the reasons that I mentioned to you before, because very often in the discussion someone will just go "Oh, I never thought of it that way before." That's OK, but we still want to hear what you thought of when you first heard the thing, and even if it is "I just didn't understand where he was going with that" that is very helpful.

1. Pastor John: *So no matter what you have to share; positive or negative it's really, really appreciated. The first question asks basically, if you are the same gender as the woman in the story, does it help you to relate to them better and if not, not [he laughs]. So, what do you think? Who wants to kick off? OK, Joanne.*

Joanne: I am coming from mostly a male centered background so my life style has always kind of been submissive and.....I am just beginning to relate to the women in the Bible. I have always heard stories of males and authority and submissiveness and I think that I am beginning to relate a lot better to the female characters.

Judy: It is interesting you should say that because we.....but when I read the Bible it really doesn't matter to me if it is a man or a woman because I look at the reaction.....so it was very nice to hear women represented in the Bible, but to hear the story itself.....

Pastor John: So you didn't feel anything? What else? Anybody else?

Mike: I was saying that I wasn't attracted by the fact that the principle character in the story was a woman but I saw them more as stories about relationships; person to person, Jesus to the women, and God to his people. But that is how I looked at it and I think that all three interactions were occurring in the story.

Pastor John: Yeah

Will: And then of course, to us. The application in our lives.

Mike: Yeah, I think I have to agree. Tim didn't have to retell the story of Leah with "Lee", with a male in it so that I could get it. And, as a matter of fact in that story, there is something that I could relate to. In Her character, as a guy I could relate to some of the things she was going through. So.....and it didn't really matter to me. I could see myself and that was one thing.....I could see myself even in some of these female characters, in the things they struggled with, it didn't really matter.

Horace: I would echo the same, most of the same things in that the message, the real message in each story was a message that could be applied to anybody, not only a female. I think in one case, uh, with Abigail, I got the feeling that I was having some kind of emotional attraction to some women outside. As a matter of fact I was sitting in the church and there were a lot of women around me who were really shaking their heads and giving a little.....here and there, not trying to be too loud about it. But I would say that I try to put myself in the shoes of a woman and not.....and that particular message would have appealed to me a little differently.

Mike: But even in that one, now that you brought it up, with Abigail, when I listened to it the second time, what I started thinking about is how Abigail is kind of a Christ figure. Like, it kind of transcended the whole story that David was like God, and his righteous anger was coming after this.....this sinner and she gets in between. She is like the advocate for him. So when I listened to it the second time, I kind of came out of the story and I could really see a Christ story in it. So the femaleness didn't really matter. As a matter of fact.....is like Christ.

Anthony: I guess similarly for me it is the way that it is delivered, the story like you could give it a particularly female-only kind of spin. But it was presented in such a way that it applied either broadly or made the female aspect of it very understandable in a way that it could cross over to things that guys would understand more.

Jennifer: I think there is, in general, as a man or a woman, you could understand any of the stories. I think there are some insignificant, like small, details, that as a woman you would understand, just because you are a woman. And thinking about how she would have felt at that time or what she might have been thinking and it's usually harder to picture what the other gender would be thinking because we think so differently.

Alia: I could relate better to it.....where I am from, women can't.....even though in the Bible it says.....

Gerard:I really appreciated the fact the message.....was professional and I related to them. The one that hit me most was Leah. Ya' know, having the wrong focus, making possibly the wrong choices. Having those impact your life day in and day out,

week in and week out, and you just felt her condition and felt your own condition.....so I am sure that it must have hit women in different ways.....then they hit me.

2. Pastor John: *Ok, let's slide into the second question. It kind of piggy-backs on the first question uhh... How do you feel while you were listening to it? Like I said, I want you to think of the double side of the question. If you just received a notice that we would have a series on women, or if you remember an announcement beforehand; Pastor Tim saying that there was gonna' be a series on women, what your initial reaction was and whether that was the same as you went through it, as you listened to them, or whether it differed.*

Mike: I think my initial reaction was positive and I was looking forward to it. But what I found was that the difference between going through the series and hearing about it was I think when I first heard it I thought well, I'll learn something new about women which is great. What I found out was that I learned more about God, and I learned about something even in myself, that what interested me at the beginning was not what interested me during the series. So, they were both positives. Different perspective.

Will: I think..... the story I found the most interesting, only because, Leah..... when I read that story she is not the one that I particularly focus on. I always focus on the fact that he was cheated, he was bamboozled, and that he worked an additional seven years for the wife that he did want. I guess in the context of understanding, in that culture I think of him.....that having more than one wife, well not that that's what God wants, but in that culture that was OK. And I never really focused on the names that Leah gave her children and how they changed over the years, and how that reflected her relationship with God. Leah was, I guess.....the journey that would lead to the (lineage) to the Christ. I found that to be, for me, the most enlightening. They are all good, but that one was great because I had never thought of it that way before.

Pastor John: Any initial impression when you heard there was gonna' be a series on women? Any initial reaction?

Will: Like I said, the initial reaction was "Oh, this is for Tim's paper," [Everyone laughs]. "He's writing sermons, and he's also writing chapters." [More laughter].... "Tim, I look forward to reading it."

Judy: I was happy when I heard he was going to be teaching on women becauseI think, I don't know how to word this, women are not looked at as being a strong part in the religion, or in the faith, and I think that's wrong because I feel that some women that may have more experience in a specific area, or situation that God wants to teach or God can work through that person more than if it's a man or whatever. And that person should be able to express God's teaching what's going on in their life. And some religions don't allow that, and so it's great and encouraging to women having him teach stories on women in the Bible.....on all different subjects.....and I really appreciated that.....

Joanne: When I heard that Tim was going to preach on a series of messages on women I was not overly excited, but it wouldn't have stopped me from coming to church to hear Tim preach. But I found that as I listened to them and as I really tried to pay attention and focus that it wasn't always so much what the women were or their background or personality, but it was what God was teaching this.....as far as relationships and faith and trust and Him being the total answer to everything. And that was what I found. And I also, like Wil, I found the names of the children interesting and how each one brought her closer to God.

Alia: It's true, I was very interested.....where I am from and the church I used to go to, the only characters they used to talk about were men. Women, they only rarely brought up characters of women and I thought it was very good and in the eyes of Christ we are both the same. I was very interested in Leah. I related a lot to her. At the beginning I thought Leah was a deceiver. She wasn't supposed to be married to Jacob and then I didn't look at it from the other way.....

Horace: I looked forward to it when I first heard about it. It did turn out that the actual messages didn't have to do with the fact that.....women at all. It could be.....(men learn from it). Though, I think the message itself, or the messages themselves, did really try to bring out some points. I was shocked when I heard about the number of battered women, for instance. That was something that made me go, "What?! I didn't know such things existed." But, to sum it up, I think I looked forward to it, but was disappointed.....But I think I learned some things too, besides the central messages.....

Anthony: I don't think my experiences were too different. My initial expectations were good, in that I didn't know a whole lot about the godly women of the Bible exactly. They don't seem to be the most commonly preached on thing. And it seemed like an effective thing in ways we've talked about, as far as being able to connect with people a little differently then the same scriptural contexts that are used so commonly, and the change is always kind of refreshing. Had I realized what it would be, I guess I would have been looking forward to it more. It was kind of interesting, but I didn't really go for it because I also felt like I could just pick up a book and read it. But, it was interesting. What I got out of it was more generic, like Horace just said which was both a little more enlightening to me and so it made me want to hear the subsequent ones a little more maybe. But I also felt like I wanted to know more about the godly womanhood of those women, and not just the generic godliness that could be applied to everybody. Because I still feel like I have never heard a whole lot about being a godly woman specifically as that role. Growing up outside the church without Christians around me I have also not really seen it much either. It was kind of a mixed thing on both ends.

Jennifer: Umm, I was happy about it when I heard about it. I just think that it is really cool to hear about these very ordinary women and the incredible things that God did through them. What Anthony was kind of talking about, I thought of too. I feel like God doesn't.....I mean, we are equals as men and women in God's eyes, but he made us very different, and I feel like I am just very interested in learning about being a godly woman. And it is interesting to read about the men in the Bible and the women in the

Bible because I feel like God uses men and women differently, and just in different ways, and it is inspiring.

Gerard: My first thought was, this should be good, because I haven't heard a series on women before. Not being part of the congregation he came to me in a little bit of a different way when Tim asked me to be part of it. But, thinking of it pastorally, the second thought that hit me was "Man, this is gonna' be hard. This is gonna be hard to do well." And I never get excited about a series anyway. Usually I hear the series title and think, "Well, this could be interesting." But when I hear the first message I will either get hooked or I will.....the series. But I got hooked. It was good.

Pastor John: It defined your expectations? From just the title, this is going to be a series on women? [Gerard agreed]. One of the things that is almost a common thread through all your comments was that this was not just a typical...like, OK, Eve, let's jump to Ephesians 5. And Ruth and Mary. And a lot of things that were appreciated were the new things that were brought out in these characters. So, in that sense, even if you weren't excited about it, your expectations were.....[He finishes the sentence but Mike is talking over him].

Mike: What surprised me were the people he chose. He used this word "insignificant." I mean, not Ruth, not Mary, but just...ya' know, Abigail. Not the ones that stood out in my mind, but they are just these little treasures throughout scripture. It's really a blessing.

3. Pastor John: *What do you think about the.....we just finished a series on James, a whole different type of approach. James, again, is very different than Paul. But, still, when you hear sermons and its just teaching, and precepts, and principles.....how did that compare to a sermon on characters when you're just drawing from characters lives? Do you see a big difference, and do you react to it differently? So what do you think?*

Anthony: I did react very differently, in a good way. I just have a habit, perhaps, of intellectualizing all sorts of things, whether it's church or work or anything. It was a lot easier to not do that during this sermon series, because it wasn't so much of a precept. It was a person in their experience. I was able to stay on that more human level and not run off into lots of theological questions and thoughts, which is good too, but one of the things when I was first coming around to Christ and to faith and things that was difficult was the only type of "church," not Christian church, but church background I had was completely intellectualized faith. So, it is still sort of a habit I like to keep an eye on, and it was a lot easier this way.

Jennifer: I think, for me, it's more interesting. I mean, not that it's not interesting to learn about the other stuff, but when you are talking about people, like these were actual people, and things that they went through it just adds a lot to it. And I think even for the person preaching.....I mean, I feel like Tim, throughout this whole series on

women, he was just very passionate about it. He has a lot of compassion, and it comes through a lot. It is easier to get into.

Joanne: I think, for me, the teachings from Paul and letters seems to be a more of a lecture.....following certain rules or whatever. Then, when I hear the stories about women it was more of an emotional impact and I could relate to that a lot better.....trying to figure out what does this mean and what does that mean.

Will: I think there was a reason why Christ used to convey the spirit of truth through parables. Essentially, through this series we were given pictures. Tim, verbally, would describe the context; the culture, the terrain, what the names of the individuals meant. I particularly liked when he helps describe what words really mean because they are lost in translation a lot of times. So, as opposed to studying or doing a sermon on Paul or James where you are kind of familiar with the subject matter and maybe in your head, as Tim is preaching, let's say on Paul...you are saying, "Well, what about this? What about that?" There is an intellectual jogging over positions and issues. But when you are telling a story, you just basically listen. There are pictures being painted and I found myself, as I was re-listening some of the sermons that I had already heard, I could see Tim delivering the punch line or the story line, but it is subtle in terms of....I may be jumping a little bit ahead here....how he opened the sermon with a story or something.....and then led into the story, the scripture, and then ended with the conclusion of whatever he opened up with. And I thought that was good. He's a good preacher.

Mike: I think the story kind of put legs on the principles. For example in the letters, it says be a servant, love like Christ did, sacrifice like Christ did. For instance, the story of Abigail, she lived it. The principles come alive because it comes alive in the person. I'm a person, my life is a story. Everyone's life is kind of a story. So, what do those principles look like in a human being? Well, it looks like what Abigail did. She stood between David's wrath and her husband. Her story reflects my story. I relate to what she went through.

Horace: I think I like them both, I like both styles. I like eating chicken on Monday and meat on Tuesday, my inclination is..... so you have some variety there. My inclination though, is the stories. I tend to relate to them a little bit easier. I think there are times when I would like to read James. If I had to give it a slight preference I would say the stories, but I think I like them both.

Judy: I agree they are both important, but I think the stories are good for people who are.....So I think they are both important. I like Tim and his stories because it illustrates specific situations, emotions, and I can know what's going on....You can feel the reality of the situation and how that person reacted, and that encourages you more and faith in God in a similar situation it could teach you what to do when I am there, so it is very important.

Gerard: I felt convicted from the choice of the stories, of the subject matter, because I have been personally feeling much more comfortable with Paul and James and

staying preaching within that format. It's easier, you get locked into content and understand what it is and you can move around in that. I have tried to push myself to preach more in the gospels. Now Tim is going into these women-seemingly insignificant women-so I said "I have to do this!" It was scary, because now you are thinking along different lines, because when you are reading Paul and teaching Paul, there is doctrine there that you can kind of pull apart. You have everything nicely packed. Then, you read the account of a woman and she is actually living out this doctrine or heresy.....whatever she's doing. Now, you have to make sense of a life. Where it is much easier to make sense of this point, this point, and this point. So it is exciting to listen to and hear it unfold.

Mike: The stories aren't clean though, like with Leah. You finish that section and he goes, "By the way, she reverted back to her old life and other things later....." You don't get that nice, clean happily ever after thing. Because you know it's human beings and it's a story and it's going to be that back and forth that we all go through.

Anthony: To me, that makes it so good because whether it is for someone who is new to church or is of the mindset, a typical sermon can sound so simple and you know that your life isn't that simple. And it is simple, the truths of the Bible are simple, but it's very hard to reconcile that simplicity with your complexity and it often just makes you feel worse that you can't do that. Then you just feel dumb because it seems so simple and you can't do it. This being so real that not being so neatly tied up but still biblical and godly and all that. To me feels like it makes that transition for you. It bridges that gap for you.

Gerard: For me, it takes all your preconceived categories and then you read this person's account and it throws the categories all up in the air.....

Mike: Right.

Gerard: And now you are trying to figure out how all these fit together. It's beautiful in a way that these accounts do fit together, but not easily.

4. Pastor John: *It is interesting and one way of putting it, like Mike said, is that the stories flesh out the principles, literally. Mike started out by saying that it (the stories) put legs on it (the principles). It fleshes it out. It puts a human face to the principle.....and the reality. Now, here's the question: with the story, some of these stories are very short and we are not given the full character details. However, in Tim's sermons he does fill in some of the blanks. So, how do you react to that? Do you feel it helps the story along? Does it distract? What is your reaction to that? It's a good contrast, where Gerard talks about preaching from James and Paul, you have got your concept and then you think, "Well how do I teach on this and illustrate it?" But here with the character, and sometimes when you are given a character you are just given little bits of the character, how do you fill that story in? So, by adding color to the story, kind of color commentary to a story that sometimes is just a skeleton outline. So how do you react to that? Does it detract; does it distract?*

Jennifer: I feel that it's helpful. I feel like Tim does a good job with it. He will say a lot of times, when there is stuff that is not talked about in the Bible or things that are left out, he might give you a couple of options of what may have happened or how things may have happened. And it's good because it gives you somebody else's perspective and if I had just sat and read it I might have thought certain things and then hearing Tim preach on it, he may have brought up different things that I never would have thought of. So I definitely think it's helpful.

Mike: I found it engaging but I also found it distracting because I was waiting for him to say "I am filling in the blanks here" or "this is just ideas." I was always waiting for him to say "this is not in the text." This red flag goes off that someone is going to walk out of the church thinking that all of the stuff is true, that this is the way it happened. That part of me was saying "Please keep saying 'I am filling this in' or 'this may not be the way it happened.'" For me, as much as it was engaging and helped me to get into the story there were times when I would be distracted by it because I was a little concerned about that.

Pastor John: Do you think he sufficiently made that clear? That he was forced to infer what may have happened.

Mike: In my notes.....most of me did (thought that he sufficiently made that clear). But there was one sermon, I don't remember which one, but I was waiting for him to say that and he didn't. But, in other sermons he did.

Pastor John: Also, we are talking about four sermons. So there may have been some that were just not really, really helpful and some that were distracting.....

Judy: I liked when he.....that's one of the reasons that I came to this church because beside from the skeleton outline of the story he adds the base of emotions.....to that skeleton. If I wanted to read that story in the Bible, I could sit home and read it. I come here on Sunday to hear preaching, so I want all that because it helps me to better understand the whole situation. Otherwise I would have to go to school and learn all that stuff. He is very good with it.

Joanne: I found it very helpful in building background.....If you just open up the Bible and start reading you can just not know where you're coming from with any of this. Without that background that he would give, even though some of it seemed as though he was saying "Well, this could have happened." He wasn't exactly saying it was the truth, but he was giving us things to think about. Why did this woman sin and become an adulteress? Was it because her husband left her? Was it this, that, or the other thing? He gave several examples and I think that makes it easier to understand because I think that's the way that we, as humans, approach things sometimes. We are not sure why we make the choices we make. I think the way that he presented it was very helpful and it made it clearer.

Will: I think for me what I have always wondered about, when I heard about the story of the woman in adultery, was the guy. Why is it that it is the woman's virtue that gets.....why does she suffer the consequences, when there were two people in the act? She wasn't alone in her conquest. I think that that filling in the blank was, "well, this is what it was like back then" and when he said that I thought, "I'm sure in his studies he has read something." When I was in college taking Bible we had Erdmann's (handbook) with us. You read a passage of scripture, then you go to Erdmann's, which was a topical Bible, or it would fill in a little of the context of when something was being written or why it was being written that way. So that helped me understand. You read and you know that the whole premise of the Pharisees coming for Jesus was to trap him. You knew that. But still, where is the guy? He must have known if they were there.....it makes an interesting story. It brings a context to the story that she may not have necessarily been a notoriously loose woman. Maybe this was a one-time thing and she's found and brought before Jesus to be condemned. So I thought that was very helpful in helping me understand that that is one reason why maybe the guy is not there.

Anthony: Questions four and five were very similar to.....it's a tough piece for me because I feel really strongly on both directions about this. Of the preachers that I have heard, Tim is one of the best, if not the best at filling in these things and digging up some really relevant, although obscure things that make two hundred percent difference in the understanding of it. I also find that it's the thing that drives me nuts. This is not saying that it is bad, but I am not a person with a good attention span and I feel like my brain is going about one and half times faster than it needs to be a lot of times and I struggle a lot. I don't know if it is me or if it's that he doesn't necessarily articulate the exact connection and I don't know where he's going with his information, and sometimes he explains it so thoroughly, or he gives it two or maybe three different ways. Which is good if you don't get it the first time, but if you do, and you have a short attention span, by the third time I am thinking about something completely not involving church and miss wherever he goes next. Now, not only am I confused but I am lost and it's kind of funny. But it is a difficult for me because I don't think it is a bad thing exactly because I know a lot of people can follow him. But, it is a huge struggle for me because it is rare that I will go through a Sunday that I will be able to follow half of what he says. This past Sunday where he did a lot of text work, I followed very well because I tend to. But, the more topical sermons are difficult because of those things, I guess. I think he does a great job of explaining it, but sometimes I feel like I want it to be more compact.

Pastor John: Was it different listening to it on tape then listening to it live?

Anthony: Good question.

Jennifer: You can rewind it when you listen to it on tape, which is helpful.

Anthony: Which I did do. There is a certain difference within the time frame of things. It's not like I want to run out on Sunday or anything. We often stay around for another twenty minutes on Sunday after church is over. When listening to the tape it is helpful from a volume perspective of things to be able to pause it and stop and give my

brain a chance to settle and stop scrambling. That was helpful when listening to the tape at home. By thirty minutes in on Sunday I am usually wanting it to end because I am so lost and frustrated personally that it gets difficult.

Judy:Sometimes he may do that purposely. He goes on and on sometimes to just illustrate the point of the story to where you get flustered by it and you get to feel what the people in the story are feeling. I think he does that to prove a point.

Anthony: I agree. I think it works pretty well and that.....it works for most people. I am not really your standard audience person. I present certain things with my job and I have taken a couple of, not speaking classes in college, but short training things. I know some of the technical reasons behind it. I am one of those, the five percent that the standard procedures don't always apply to and it makes it difficult for me. But I understand its general purpose. I am just throwing it out there since I am here saying where it is for me.

Alia: I find it helpful.....it keeps your attention..... Relates it to real life.....I find that very interesting.....

Horace: I think in some cases I liked it and in other cases.....I am one of those, maybe similar to you, that I always like to get to the point real quick. Sometimes it takes awhile to get there. There is a bit of impatience to get to the point, let's get the message here. But I would say that somebody with less ability, it would be very risky for them to take that approach. He is able to handle that quite well. Listening to the tapes, I didn't need more. As long as your mind is totally relaxed I think it's OK. Maybe on Sunday mornings you are a little bit tired and you find it more challenging, I don't know. But I didn't need more listening to it.....its pretty good educational information.

Wil: It's your frame of mind. We had an opportunity to listen to these tapes essentially, at your leisure. So we found the time and said "OK, let's give this time. Let's sit and listen." When you come to a church service, you have to be there at a certain time and you go through the order of worship and so we are not always on the same page. I always wonder what Tim is seeing. We are just sitting facing forward, we are focused on him, he's talking. But, he is seeing the congregation. Maybe he is sensing that he is losing some people, so he feels he may have to embellish his point or really emphasize his point to get the point across. I find it very interesting, the dynamics of communication when you have got a room full of people who have self-talk going on all the time and has anyone present information and get your attention so that at least you remember what the object or purpose or thesis statement is. So, when I was listening to the tapes I was able to pick up the thesis statement right away. I missed it while he was speaking.

Pastor John: It is a whole different context.

Will: Yes, it is

Pastor John: And also, when you were listening to it at home you had been asked to listen for certain things.

Mike: I have been going to this church for about ten years now, and I think Tim has gotten better at that. He has gotten better at emphasizing the main point throughout the sermon. He used to do it at the beginning and maybe at the end, but he is putting that in more often now. That helps me because it kind of brings me back. If I am starting to get distracted about something that he is going into in depth, by him coming out of that and saying the main point, it brings me back. I got it, and then we continue forward. So, I think he has been doing a better job of that over the years.

Anthony: I do think the same thing. I have been around almost six (years) now and at least..... say, within the last two years, of these three (sermons) the one on Abigail I tracked with and I tracked really well with. I had a lot of trouble with the other three.

Jennifer: Well I follow Tim all the time and it's rare that I am ever not following him. But, in particular, the one about the widow of Zarephath and there was a while that I was very lost. I had no idea what was going on. I was listening to it, and I was following, and then I was just at a place where I was like "I don't even know how I got here." There was a lot of information and...

Pastor John: Was it during the famine conditions?

Jennifer: No. Umm...when was it? [Talking to herself].

Will: For me, it was when he brought up the point that he wanted her to trust (Him) not only for her present needs but also for her future needs. Like, the fact that her son was dying.....

Jennifer: Yeah.

Will: It was like "OK...uhh". I was thinking, "Well here is this woman who is a widow, who has got nothing and God sends Elijah to come stay with her and 'mooch' off her.".....She knows he's prophet and you have to explain that. I know what he meant when he said that, "You could tell it was a prophet." Ya' know why? His hair was uncut. But he didn't mention the camel skin and the belt. Those are dead giveaways of a prophet. But anyway, those two points, kind of simple. Ya' know, trusting in the Lord for your present needs and also for your future needs. And drawing an analogy from the context of a son, what does that mean? Well, your children are your security.

Jennifer: Yeah, there was a lot of stuff that he needed to give information about so that you could know what was going on. Because there was so much to know, I got kind of lost.

Will: I agree

Anthony: Clocking that one, to give a quick anatomy, it was about thirty minutes it seemed of setup before he started actually explaining purposeful points about the widow, and the faith, and the present, and the future, and all that. It was really interesting information, but it was also not all linear and building on each other. It was kind of like pockets of stuff and then he started tying it together.

Mike: I think if you have to ask, “where is he going?” for too long, like in a thirty minute period, if I find myself asking “where is he going?” over thirty minutes...if it’s ten minutes, I can hang in there, when it goes on a little longer, I get restless, like, “where is this headed?” I think that was the issue.

Anthony: Even just over the summer I feel a lot of them have focused more efficiently than the spring, so to speak. Just, I thought since I had some “time notes” I thought I’d throw it out there.

Pastor John: You guys mentioned how he repeats the theme. Do you remember what the theme was in the widow of Zarephath?

Anthony: I don’t think I ever found a theme.

Pastor John: I think it was repeated like three times.

Anthony: I found themes, mind you. I don’t think I found a theme that I was able to identify.

Mike Pregitzer: Trials will allow us to take a step of faith.

Pastor John: That’s half of it.

Mike: Through that step of faith, God’s grace of revision will be shown.

Gerard: Take a step of faith in times of weakness.

Jennifer: Faith is contagious.

Judy: Trust not law.

Pastor John: “Sometimes you need to take a step of faith and sometimes you need to sit back in faith.” Remember he used that three times. Three times I think he used that analogy of stepping forward where Elijah was asking her to now take a step of faith. Whereas, with the dead son, she needs to sit back and watch God just do something. I think he used that line three times.

Will: That was a difficult passage to create an entire message around that text. But I think sometimes you can use something like that. If you are following, if you are

tracking like a fable story.....the story is coming and then all of a sudden the punch line comes and then it all comes together.

5. Pastor John: *We are kind of leading into question five. Irritating, helpful or even constructive criticism. What could have....how could the sermons have been made better. How could they have been improved upon?*

Mike: I think like I just said, if the set up, or where you are going is going to take an extended period of time, set it up at the beginning. Maybe state the direction at the start, even if you don't quite get it because you haven't gotten there yet. Maybe state that first and then go, like... "This is where I'm headed; this is where I'm headed." That would help me as a listener [to] track.

Jennifer: Yeah, because even if you don't get it, then you know what the point is going to be, so when you get there, then you know.

Will: I was talking to Mike [Pregitzer] on Sunday about how Sunday School went. You spend a lot of time preparing and sometimes you wonder... "Did I get the message across?" I think that people just come to Sunday School or to the church service... there is about maybe three, four, five hours of preparation that goes into the sermon. When you are spending that much time meditating on the word, meditating on your thoughts about the word, there are revelations that come to you. Then to try to convey that to someone in forty minutes when you have got to make your points. I can't tell you how many times I have tried and then I think, "That didn't flow like it flowed when I was thinking about it." I think that is because of how much time you are spending in the word or meditating on the passage.

Pastor John: Also, there is a whole different step to studying than the presentation of what you have studied and that sometimes doesn't get a lot of attention.

Mike: I think as far as "helpful" I like when he explains the language subtleties. That whole description of Christ writing in the sand and what writing means, that word has only been used in all that kind of stuff. That stuff just grabs me.

Jennifer: Yeah

Mike: When he starts doing that it grabs a hold of me and I sit up. I think that stuff is just fascinating.

Will: And he didn't shrink away from the fact that it is a controversial thing. He didn't scarp the issue.....Then I thought, when he presented that.....what came to mind was in John "I have come to save the world not to condemn it." Because he purpose to be on the Earth at that time was to bring salvation not condemnation. Condemnation will come.....

Mike: We talked about his thoroughness a little bit, and how he can be really thorough. But, also I really leave his sermons with a lot of questions about what was going on. I have questions about myself and how I am going to apply this to my life and that kind of thing. I don't really leave the sermon saying, "Ya' know, he didn't really explain that too much" or "I still don't know what that means."

Pastor John: So you rarely leave sermons like that? [confused]

Mike: Right, rarely. So, on that note...

Gerard: The sermons are very well written too. Not only how he brings the subject matter, the theme up to date and application, but the way he describes certain situations. I forget some of the things he used, but ya know, he said that this was like Marti Gras, boom, you immediately know what is going on and that kind of description is so helpful to the listener.

Anthony: Something that wasn't very apparent in these four at all but, just for the sake of mentioning it, there are times when I feel that we grab a scripture that is pretty general and then attach a topic that fits well enough, but is kind of like the sixth point of that scripture and then launch into forty minutes of the topic and it is almost like the scripture is there as like, "Well, I gotta use a scripture," and it is almost like a token thing and that throws me, for one thing, because I seem to not follow where he's going and I don't know what to do with that sometimes. These, actually followed pretty well with all that. If anything, the third one, to me, was a little bit like that, but not very.

Pastor John: The woman caught in adultery?

Anthony: No, I think that was the fourth one [someone says "The third one was Leah"]. Yeah, I think it was Leah. I loved the story of Leah and all that, but sort of the metaphysical point that came out of all that, kind of took me quite a bit by surprise. Now, in this case I liked it because I learned a lot of stuff and I got an interesting....but for the tracking and the consistency thing, sometimes that is a little odd. Especially if it is a familiar passage, one that everyone has heard if you have been around the church for two years. It's good to take them in your own direction, but, if you don't, like Mike said, kind of set out that you are going there in the first place, I am still looking in that old fashion direction that I'm used to and it's quite a bit later that I realized that I have been doing this all along for a half hour, then I get annoyed, which doesn't help.

Horace: You were bamboozled. [Laughter]

Will: With that one, I think I mentioned Leah was the sermon I particularly enjoyed the most.... And it is because, and I think I saw this coming when the pastor went through the sons of Leah and came to Judah, before he said it...that I thought was the line of David. And when I came away from that (what I thought) was that we often look at people in the church, people with certain gifts and think that they are pursuing a ministry or doing things that I would like to do, or I wish I could do. We think, "I don't think God

can use me.” What that story did for me was: here was a woman who suffered, she happened to be a woman, but guys suffer loss of confidence, and discouragement, and what have you, and more often than not, you see God using not the first born, not the prettiest or the strongest person, the person that people think is charismatic. God uses who he will use, and you see that, and it is encouraging because you think, “Well, God can use me....” That is what I found very interesting.

6. Pastor John: *Let’s shift it to the last one, because we are completely out of time. The rating. Just, how do you rate the sermon and why?*

Jennifer: I don’t know if I answered this the right way. When we are rating it are we....I looked at it as whether or not it was helpful and interesting and not so much based on the particulars of the sermon...just overall.

Pastor John: That’s good. Did you come up with an answer?

Jennifer: I gave it a ten. I really enjoyed it. I enjoyed all of them. I think they were very interesting and they were definitely helpful. Being that they were about people in the Bible, I feel like in general, in the Bible, you learn about God’s character and general things about God being just and all these other things. But when you read about the experiences of people, you get to see God being God but, in a personalized way, through each person. I just think you can learn a lot through that.

Pastor John: Let’s go to the other end, who gave it a one? Just kidding.

Judy: Basically the same, I gave it a ten. I thought, I really enjoyed hearing about the different people in situations because you could put yourself in the situations and different outcomes of the stories and trusting God.....just all the teachings from the stories, I can relate to them better, and you can feel the situation almost.

Joanne: I gave it a ten. I found a lot of it to be helpful and interesting except for maybe the one about the sin, the woman caught in sin. In that particular story I felt like when the Pharisees came and were trying to have Jesus look like a fool in the other people’s eyes or show that they still had the power and he didn’t, I was feeling like that is a judgmental kind of a thing, and I personally feel that I try not to be that kind of person. I try to be more helpful in situations, and not that the story was told in any way that I couldn’t understand, it was just that I personally felt that it was something I couldn’t relate to quite as much because I feel more like I am not that judgmental. I try not to be and this was a pretty strong story about how people felt against Jesus and against the woman. I think that in some ways I would feel more Christ-like in that I would want to find a solution. Make both parties somewhat happy, not totally happy, but at least be (a peacemaker).

Alia: I gave it at least a nine...I didn’t want to give it a ten. The reason is because I was very, very happy with it and it showed me, actually, that there are a lot of women who go through tough times. Sometimes when we go through tough times we think that

we are the only ones that are going through it. It [the sermons] encouraged me in that way. I learned that God puts us in certain tough situations so that we can use it for his glory.

Horace: I also rated them highly I.....they were very positive in my mind; I think they each had a powerful message and had something that you could take away. But I feel that I have to agree that some related better than others unlike most of you, I did like the widow of Zarephath, as the one that appealed to me, I think the message is very, very powerful. The one where the woman was caught in adultery was probably not as ...something that I related to.

Mike: “This is Will Perez, I gave it a two” [Laughter]. I gave it a nine. We talked a lot about positives and negatives and I don’t want to rehash those. I came into it thinking that I was going to learn something new about women and I came out of it learning a lot about God and a lot about myself, so for that reason and the applicability of the stories...like I said there are some things that distracted me. If he didn’t always say “I am kind of making this up” or “I’m speculating.” That kind of detracted from it. So that is where the nine comes from. Overall I enjoyed it more than the James series. I felt that listening to the James series it sometimes seemed forced. Like you had to plow through this few verses and make your point, whereas with this it just seemed to flow. So I don’t know if that had anything to do with Tim’s state of mind or whatever, but I just felt that this flowed really nicely.

Will: I rated it a ten. It was extremely helpful and interesting and on balance I thought it was. I thought it was a continuity of things and giving that they were different stories.....in response to God’s calling and when I say calling I mean a call to action. A call to believe or not to believe in each of the characters.....so I thought it was a helpful series.

Anthony: Perhaps not surprisingly it was difficult for me, as I mentioned before, the conversation about it has been also helpful, you might add. I wrote down a three, not for criticism of the sermon or delivery but I am just being honest I think perhaps one of the biggest differences for me is that I don’t rise above the frustration, that I find being lost...but I also got frustrated, and two days later I remember the frustration a lot better than the point and that is a matter of maturity, I think and other things. Sitting and thinking about it; evaluating it wouldn’t come across so bad but thinking back to when I originally heard them it is just so difficult for me to track, personally that it makes it difficult to give it a high...rating.

Gerard: I gave it a nine. I am a fan of Tim’s, he is a great preacher, but the thing that that struck me about it was the introductions really get your attention. He moves through the material well. As a preacher you are always going out on a limb and using all this other stuff and he values the word of God very highly and anybody who does, they are going to use historical data carefully. So I kind of listened to him and trust him as he moves out on those limbs and I think more than that, even the content...I was intellectually stimulated, emotionally I was stimulated, but every message...I think I am

answering honestly, every message brought me to an attitude of worship and that is priceless. So I had to give him a nine since I am his brother-in-law [Laughter].

Pastor John: Anything else that...we have gone over time...anything else that you feel you need to add? Thanks.

Focus Group #3
Transcript 8/ /04

Participants: Bob Orsillo, Ralph Tolomieri, Santiago Tacaronte, Rasheeda Tacaronte, Blossom Gonzalez

Pastor John: Did gender really matter?

Rasheeda: I think being a woman you tend to understand more like, feel like, they actually feel being a woman.

1. Pastor John: *So you did relate more to the character being a woman and understand more about what she went through?*

Bob: It took me back many years. I never kicked my wife or my girlfriend out of the car pregnant or not pregnant, but I was the type of man, a macho man, being Italian, those were the rules sometimes it's good and a lot of times it's bad. Everything had to be on time, everything had to be proper, and the way he presented it to me, it really dramatized it as I was there, OK, so as far as my rating, it I jumped on it I took everything.....I couldn't hear all of it. When he goes low [speaks softly] I can't hear, like I said, it brought.....me between the two sisters. Also I can see how Leah had her feelings hurt, her true feelings for her younger sister.....her younger sister was pretty.....she wasn't, but she was pretty when she was brought out. I did have that in the family. To me it was breathtaking. My heart went out to her. The little part of it being truthful about the stoning quote. Quote your first impression, or of being a human being, of being a man you call a woman like that again from where I came from. That's what I got out of it.

Pastor John: It didn't get in the way at all, the main character being a woman and you related to what she went through? You felt sympathetic?

Bob: Yes definitely.....

Ralph: Gender did not matter to me at all. I do believe there is a giant difference between men and women's life experiences and given emotions, but the fact that the main character was a woman simply means that as an understanding of who I am in my relationship with God the end result in every sermon is important to me, it's not so much how we get there. Men and women and how we relate with God in my opinion is exactly the same. It doesn't change. The fact that it was a woman simply was an implement; a tool to get there. But I can understand that the stories based upon a woman.....this did not bother me one bit, and he could have talked about an animal or an inanimate figure and I would have still zeroed in on the message. So that is the way I felt.

Santiago: I didn't think it made a difference because in each story there was a man involved. That's why you know the big-time movies throw out the best supporting actor, because you know the main character, you can still get something out of the secondary character, and you know, like he said, or like Blossom said, if you reverse it you would

still get the same effect, you know. But when I listen to the sermon there is different things that I do. I put myself in the situation whether it is a man or a woman. Well if I am a man then I put myself into the situation or if I don't put myself in the situation I play the part of the supporting actor, the Jacob. You know the way he treated her. All he was after was getting Rachael, and basically didn't care about Leah's feelings and what she thought. His eyes were for the other sister. So, I put myself into these situations, and how I would react, and how would I listen to God, and I figure it helps after the service, after when I get home because they always, you know the story.....they always relate to your life somehow.

Ralph: That's an interesting point too because not just the spiritual message that you gain in the sermon but the fact that it is centered around a women and a women's feelings, it kind of enlightens me as a man and my relationship to a women, and to my wife. These stories really do help about them, help me, probably help me to understand how sensitive and how we should be. So it's not just a spiritual message it's a practical hands on story. It's a message about man the relationship of man and women, and the relationship between women and man. It's kind of practical too.

Rasheeda: I feel the same way about it when we are listening to a sermon together. And the way that Pastor Tim add to it, to the readings, I feel that it would also probably help him [motions toward her husband Santiago] to understand what I am feeling, the way that Pastor Tim phrases stuff. So to me it not only helps to listening to it but it helps in my personal life also.

Pastor John: Let me ask you a real specific question in the sermon about Abigail when he asks the question about, is she submissive? Do you think that men and women react differently to that question?

Ralph: Yes, absolutely. I think so. Is it a cultural thing? Possibly, it's a cultural thing.

Pastor John: Is it a cultural thing? What do you mean?

Ralph: Submissiveness over the years.....I mean women always had the short end of the stick over the years in our culture as far as being superior, as in Adam and Eve. Adam was created first, and Eve was created as his helper. Look at the order of things here. She was his helper. Is that not an act of submissiveness? Maybe, I don't know. I mean I wasn't there to see their relationship, but the fact that God created them into that order, can you read into that possibly, I don't want to go there. I have two women sitting along side of me. But ,yes, definitely....and the macho image that you brought up Bob, that men still have the macho, so I think maybe I'm wrong but I think that submissiveness is defined differently between men and women .

Blossom: Yes, maybe I agree with you on that. I thought that she was trying to fix it. I thought she was wiser than her husband. I thought she was better, you know....a lot

better than her husband. I think that she knew she did not have to submit to him. She could do better with the decisions.

Pastor John: But even framing the word submission doesn't come up in that passage, but framing the message and asking was she submissive. Does a woman edge closer to the end of the pew than a guy does when even the issue is brought up? That's why I'm saying do men respond differently to how it was brought up?

Ralph: She was submissive to whom?

Pastor John: No, no, I'm just asking the whole issue itself.

Rasheeda: I think that women are expected more to be submissive and like Ralph said, like how we were brought up in our country, women, you were supposed to be doing everything, and when the man comes home everything is supposed to be done. You know you are supposed to cook and to clean and when the man comes home you know he doesn't have to do anything.

Pastor John: You are a lucky man [Looking at Santiago].

Santiago: We need to move back to her country [Laughter].

Rasheeda: Now being in a different relationship now for me it's hard now to be submissive, and that is one of our major problems because I'm like Abigail now. The way that I feel, like I shouldn't have to be submissive, but I think a lot of it was the way you were brought up that way that you feel. But I still feel that women....it's just expected for the women to be more submissive than a man.

Santiago: I don't know, I thought that she was being submissive because of the fact she could have let David do his thing that would have got her husband out of the way and eventually she ended up marrying David. Right? I mean he treated her like dirt.

Ralph: But it ended up like that anyway.

Santiago: Exactly, but I think she was submissive in a way to God knowing what God wanted her to do. She did the right thing. Where it still ended up at the end at the same spot but it took different roles. Which one role pleased God and the other one would not have pleased God. She could have got her husband out of the way.

Ralph: But, I have a question for you. Was she thinking in her mind the fact that she was being submissive or that she just through spontaneity, or just through her own personality was that just something that she would do not thinking of the terms of being submissive?

Santiago: Yeah, but was she doing this because of the love of her husband, and being submissive to the vow that she took with him.

Ralph: But, was it really love for her husband?

Blossom: It might have been that she was trying to save the lives of the other men.

Santiago: What other men?

Blossom: The other men, because they were going to kill the other men.

Ralph: Do we clearly know her motives?

Santiago: No, not clearly.

Ralph: I find that interesting.

Rasheeda: But in the end I thought that she was too submissive. Whatever he wanted she gave him until at the end where she decided that she was going to stand up to him, and I guess he died at the end there because she finally decided to stand up to him. Because all along she always give in to him to whatever he wanted to do.

Santiago: But then you could take and say she felt bad because she went behind his back and did what she did, so now I am going to go ahead and tell him.

2. Pastor John: *To tell you the truth the question was when you put in as Ralph said before it's a cultural thing. It's a cultural thing but it is also a hot topic in our culture that's why I meaning to see if you meant by culture and that's why when you put in that way then you have men and women responding to it. One of the biggest things in women's minds today. But, let's get onto the second question. And like I said let's look at it two ways, we're listening to a series on women. If before hand if you remember what you felt when you heard that we were having a series on women, what you're feeling was then and then now since you have come through it what you think now. It may not be the same. As women what did you think when you first heard that we were going to do a series on women?*

Rasheeda: I thought, well, when he said we were going to do a series on women, "Oh, well this is good, maybe we will get something out of it." You know you learn more about the women in the Bible and you know and we could have a better understanding also, and of those times, so I look forward to listening to it.

Blossom: I look forward to listening to it but I was expecting it to be biased, I was curious of as to how Pastor Tim was going to deliver it.

Pastor John: Did you say it might be biased?

Blossom: Biased because of it's a guy's opinion of observing a women's behavior. Right, yeah. Because like my husband, we differ in opinion with each other. Like with my husband when Bianca says something and my husband says "Did you hear that?" I

didn't think that that was what she wanted.....we see things differently.....so I thought it would be more of a guy's opinion. But then it changed.

Pastor John: But that is even more interesting. You were intrigued and you were looking forward to it, and to tell you the truth, when you have questions that make you look forward to it more, and you will listen to it more closely. So, what did you guy's think? When you heard there was going to be a series on women what did you think?

Ralph: I was neutral about it. I wasn't impressed by it one way or the other. I was just looking forward to another sermon. To be honest with you it really didn't influence me one way or the other. I was really neutral about it.

Pastor John: When you heard about a series on women what did you think? Did it interest you or what?

Bob: What do you want the beginning? The end? What do you want? Yeah it was bringing me back. What was the first one he talked about?

Pastor John: Eve, on Mother's Day he talked about Eve, but not this series, I'm talking about the whole series. The four that we have here the widow of Zarephath was the earliest.

Bob: I'm talking about these four. Like I said, it brought me back after I started hearing it more. It brought me closer and closer to where I am now, I mean I'm a housewife [Bob is retired]. It was a flashback and now I look at my son-in-law John, and I even sometimes ask Laurie, "was I a good father?" "Dad, what's wrong with you?" Cause' I see the relationship you guy's have today, OK, it wasn't like that before.....I just need to explain myself OK. I know where I am now. The message is terrific. I listen to it, and I still listen to it, and I think back, and I refresh my memory all the time every month from this month, and then to this year, to the next year, they are all there.

Santiago: For me, I guess it is always good to know the women's view point, and it was interesting to hear it from the man, and like she said that it could have been biased. That was what her original thought was. But, you know, it's always good to have that viewpoint, and like Bob said from back then to this time I think for any man to keep a good thing going, they think more with a 50/50 relationship than back then when Bob was thinking 70/30. OK maybe 95/5. You know to me, I think it was a good sermon whether it was a sermon about women, or for man whether it's a man's viewpoint, or a woman's. It's always good; you can always learn something from that, to get yourself out of trouble, or to keep yourself out of trouble.

Pastor John: OK, so beforehand nobody was turned off by, well it didn't necessarily apply to me, and after listening to sermons and the tapes, did you come away from it surprised at all, maybe what he dealt with, and how he dealt with it? Or did you come away from it feeling Pastor Tim is in touch with his feminine side? I'm just kidding....[Laughter].....even if your expectations were neutral like Ralph said, did you

come away being pleasantly surprised or did you come away disappointed? What did you think about after the service? That's more like what I am asking. What did you feel about it?

Bob: I didn't mention before, you know, how he puts himself into character sometimes, and I think it is terrific. I didn't find anything really wrong, in my opinion.

Rasheeda: I think the way that Pastor Tim puts the whole thing makes it even more interesting. You know, like the little stories he put in before and in between, it makes it more interesting, and it gives you an even better understanding of the whole sermon.

Bob: Like when he runs across the stage [Laughter].

Santiago: I would say that a good percentage or a high percentage of his sermons always start off with a story, a true story, or something that he read that you can relate the sermon to right off the bat. You know, he doesn't just go into the sermon, and you can say, "yeah, but that was back then..." He always brings up, you know, like when he started telling the story about the lady who's husband was a pastor, then he stopped being a pastor, who ended up abusing her, and then he went into the sermon which, then he tied it all together at the end. He then brings it back to the story and how the letter ended to this lady. That her husband started realizing that he was in the wrong, and that he had to get better with God and the marriage. That he would have to change. So, for me, I think that it is always helpful. I think personally any sermon that has to do with the man-women relationship always helps me in some way. I can always put it to use. Cause' the marriage is never, "OK, we are at this point now we can relax now." It's always a work in process. To me it's always good.

Pastor John: Were you surprised by anything in the series?

Ralph: I wasn't. I'm the type of person; I don't go into sermons with expectations anyway. I just hear it for what it is. But, in the end, it's not a surprise for me, its awareness; it's an enlightenment that just makes me understand God more – who He is, and His relationship to me and my relationship to Him. I never look at any of these women as 'their' relationship;" I always end up with "my relationship." Cause' I put myself in their position regardless of gender. But no surprises, just enlightenment.

Pastor John: It was a series on women, were there any women that you expected him to go over that he didn't go over? Knowing that it was a series on biblical women, who might come to mind?

Rasheeda: Eve is the first one that you think of, and that's the one he started with. That's one of the passages you would expect first, and that's what he did. But some of the others, some of these women we were not even aware of like Abigail. Leah you hear more about because of her sister and stuff, but Abigail you hear nothing. And then the

other one.....the widow.....I didn't even know anything about that one until (now.) So some of the women, when he did this series was like a learning experience for me.

Pastor John: Do you think that helps when you learn new things?

Rasheeda: Most definitely.

Pastor John: Do you guys agree with that? When there's something new or novel in a passage which you didn't know was in there, or a character who you hadn't heard of, does that help?

Bob: Nope. Cause' there are a lot of things you don't always pick the whole message up. I always pick something different up, when I'm listening to a tape, the second time I hear it different.

Santiago: I'm like Bob. I'm 50/50. If it's new, it's good. If I've heard it again, I usually, like these tapes; I listened to it two or three times. First time, I just listen to it. The second time I'll take notes. I'm like that with a movie. I watch a movie constantly. And each time, she'll [motioning to Rasheeda] come down and hear me laughing at the same part before and she'll say, "Are you watching this movie again?" And you're still laughing as if you heard it for the first time. But that's just the way I am. Now I think you can always get something new out of a sermon. Whether he said it one time or three times.

Ralph: I think repetition is necessary. As a matter of fact, a few years ago, I heard a sermon by a sermon. And his sermon was about repetition and how important it is in the Christian life. And how important it is in our world. And I understand that repetition is necessary, but man, I need fresh stuff. I really do. I am always looking for fresh stuff in sermons.

Bob: What do you mean? The Bible is the Bible.

Ralph: Yeah, but there's always a twist.

Bob: The Bible is the Bible. It's not going to be re-written.

Pastor John: Yeah, but it's a big Bible.

Ralph: Yeah, like the families of the disciples. What ever happened to them?

3. Pastor John: *OK, let's go on. When it comes to reaction, is there any difference between listening to stories as opposed to listening to teaching? Our most recent contrast is the book of James. I'm not asking did you enjoy this series better than the series on James. Did you find it different at all, let's say between preaching from the epistles, which are straightforward, spell things out, as opposed to stories – any different type of reaction?*

Bob: It doesn't matter if you're reading, studying Scripture, it's.....This is the way I feel.

Pastor John: So it doesn't matter if it's a story or whether it is teaching?

Bob: No, no, no.

Blossom:whether it is Psalms, or whatever, they all have stories behind them. That's good for me, I like the story. How they were delivered.

Rasheeda: I think it in story form makes it more interesting, that you want to listen. Cause' sometimes when you're just sitting there reading from the Bible, you know, it just tends to be like really slow and you're just reading. But when you listen to it in a story form, you really tend to take it in more. Well, I do. I tend to take it in more when it's in a story.

Santiago: I tend to relate to the story. And then again, I put myself in that situation. How would I react? Would I do what they had done? Teaching is almost like....I picture like, God being in the temple, and everyone is just sitting around just listening, rather than the actual situation where you are.....either doing something or making a decision, something like that. I tend to relate to the story more.....

Ralph: Story telling rules, it really does. It creates a picture. It's very colorful. It's like listening to a verbal movie, however it can't be just story telling. I want and I need profound truths theology has to be mixed in there. Has to be doctrine mixed in. There's got to be biblical nature mixed in, something profound of a spiritual nature to connect me in the end. I think that Pastor Tim does a very good job of that. But, I love stories. I relate to stories more so. I mean James was cool but it was kind of differential. Just kidding.

4. Pastor John: *We kind of talked about this a little bit but when Pastor Tim fills in the blanks and takes a story that is maybe ten verses long and then turns it into a fifty minute story or a half hour story. He is obviously giving you a color commentary you know filling in what is not specified in the text. Does that help or does that distract? And it could be different for different sermons if you think that this one, it was distracting to me. So, let me know.*

Ralph: I always question that, because Pastor Tim does that a lot. I think it's a great thing, it's a good thing; I like it a lot. But, I question accuracy and I know every now and then he throws in, "Well it may not have been this way," Quote, unquote. That's a good thing because he should make it very clear, especially to folks who are non-believers out there that are trying to learn about scripture. They could get the wrong information and I often think about that. Be careful how you describe the characters because scripture doesn't really define it that way and he should make sure that this is his opinion. But without a doubt it helps to draw a giant picture for me. I mean, I like it.

But, I am able to discern where scripture say this and where he is filling in the blanks. Can everybody do that? I don't know. But, I personally can.

Santiago: He tends to say during his sermon when he is giving his color commentary, he tends to say "I don't know, this is what I think." The same thing when he was talking about the rich guy, Nabel. When he was saying, I don't know, but he could have been possibly given....thoughts. But, he always says "I don't know but this is what I think" and then he gives the color commentary. And, I think I love it because it's almost like if you are listening to a baseball game on the radio, and the guy is saying, "Well, here's the pitch.....It's a home run." It's no big deal. But if the guy makes the sound of the ball being hit and it's going back "BACK, BACK GONE!!!!!!!!!" It brings the thrill back. It's the same thing if he is giving the sermon and he tells the sermon without feeling [he is making a sound] and then he says "OK let's pray." It kind of, you know, I think the color commentary is necessary to. And again he always.....there are not many times when I don't hear him say "just imagine or just think" that he throws into the sermon when he starts to do his color commentary.

Blossom: Yeah and I think when he uses those things and he throws into something, I think the olden customs, or acts, relates to what he's saying and to the present situation.

Rasheeda: I think it really makes you think also, like, about the situation. The speaker from the women's conference was doing that a lot. She would use different words in the passage and how it made you look at it differently. So, when you use different words it helps to make you look think even more. You are not just sitting there listening, but it is making you think about the whole thing also.

Blossom: Just like when he said, with Esau and Jacob. Esau realized that Jacob had taken his birthright and he said Jacob "you are a dead man." Something that we say in this day and age.

Bob: Which one did he say "Come on fellows this is the real world now." What did he say?

5. Pastor John: *Anything you find particularly helpful or irritating about the sermons? To be honest this is really helpful.*

Bob: As I said before I wasn't irritated.

Pastor John: OK, but you did mention when he goes low you can't hear him.

Bob:if I am driving or something I'm, like "turn it up!"

Ralph: He does go into a whisper.

Santiago: You know I was listening, you know, I drive a truck, so I don't have a CD player, so I borrowed Josh's CD player so I can at least listen to what's going on

when you are driving. So, I thought it was the plug or the tape itself, so I would turn it back or hit me one so you know, I wasn't sure if everyone was thinking that or whether it was the tape itself .

Ralph: Sometimes it's the tape.

Rasheeda: But, I think when his voice changes it makes it even more dramatic cause' sometimes he gets so low.

Ralph: He wakes you up.

Santiago: You're waiting and waiting.

Rasheeda: No, I'm never asleep, but you know that the way that Pastor Tim does his sermons, he always makes it very interesting. I remember when I was looking for a church and I came here. The first time that I heard Pastor Tim I have been coming back to this church. It's just the way that he does his sermons; he makes it very interesting that you want to keep hearing what he has to say.

Santiago: It's the presentation. In anything if you do it in a mellow voice you are going to put everyone asleep. If you just say turn to page one what do you think about question one and go on forth like that you're dead. It's a done deal. Where he lowers his voice and then raises it to the particular situation. It's a good deal.

Ralph: At work we have a saying you can't be everything to everyone and everyone to every thing. Being in the retail world and there is so much truth to that. It's the same thing with Pastor Tim. He can't be everything to everyone in relating every one of his messages. It just so happens that his style is appealing to me. And the fact that he keeps it simple, I like it simple. I have heard many, many pastors they go into many complicated historical facts and dates and they flip-flop all over the Bible. And I have a calloused finger from how many times I jump from this book of the Bible to that book of the Bible in one sermon. And he doesn't do that, he keeps it as simple as possible and then he drives home the message.

Rasheeda: And I think he makes it understandable for whatever age you have in there. That he makes it understandable for everyone.

Santiago: I think he tries not to show his education because of the fact of what you said, he makes it simple. There were times when I used to hear this certain pastor and he would always come out with a Greek word, and what that Greek word meant, and where you could find that word, and that word meant something else, and I was thinking and he went on and on and on, and by the time he finished I couldn't even remember what he was talking about. So, he was pretty much wasting my time with all this Greek stuff. Whereas he does it at times, he says "Back in this time this word meant this" and it ends there. You know he doesn't continue where he found in this book or he was in some college he studied this, and he goes on and on and on.....where, like you said, he was.....

you know I feel if he really wanted to he could have his own talk show. Where like you know he has to keep it simple and then he brings it home and it is a done deal.

Ralph: I just think that sermons should be for everyone. Like you said, it should be for the young kids too. Teenagers, I mean teenagers they don't want to sit back and listen to a school lecture, and that's what a lot of sermons are sometimes. They end up being very academic stuffy.....uhh.....it's not necessary. I think sermons should be more than that. I think sermons should be about life should be about our spiritual life and our relationship with God. And I really think it's helpful to younger kids, that they should be apart of the family.

Bob: One thing that I didn't say before is, this reminded me. When he tells you "turn to.....turn to.....John said so and so" and then he'll go a little bit more and then he will say "John chapter one" and then he will say "John verse four" and then he will go right into it. I think that this does distract me a little bit at that point. You know, I listen to Charles Stanley and you know he does it four or five times, and then he will say "turn to verse six", turn to verse six." He gives him two shots at it. His energy is going so fast that's for the younger generation [Laughter]. By the time it gets through the airwaves and I have asked other people, and they say the same thing. But, they won't come forward and talk about it. It's very simple.

Pastor John: You brought up the thing about using the Greek; this came up in the other groups. Do you like that when he does bring in this concept, and like I said it doesn't belabor the point but it does bring up when it is significant? Do you like that or what?

Rasheeda: I think it is good because it kind of brings you back when he uses the Greek and it takes you back into those times.

Santiago: And, sometimes you listen to a word and then he says to you and you know in Greek it meant this back then. So it's almost like a totally different thing than you thought it meant which is good, but then, like you said, he doesn't labor on it and goes on and on.

Ralph: And it's all like in doing it, I kind of like it, as long as it isn't belabored. But I think it is good because it is more accurate to me. It's accuracy in that time and what they were understanding back then as opposed to what we were understanding. It's good. I like it.

Santiago: That one word can tie into the whole thing because you thought this meant this word meant this, and it actually meant that. Then you can understand the whole sermon and where it came from and where it ties in.

Ralph: Of course I don't remember one single Greek word.

Pastor John: Anything else that is irritating? Here is your chance to perfect and change and better any future sermon.

Ralph: He has to make a decision. Does he want to keep the goatee or not? [Laughter]. This is very irritating to me. I'm just kidding about that.

Bob: Yeah, that thing has got to go!

6. Pastor John: *Anything else you can think of. OK, so let's go rating it and your basic assessment of it and that kind of thing.*

Bob: I rated him a nine. I knocked off the one because.....

Blossom: I think his sermons are great his delivery..... a nine just by principle because nobody is perfect.

Pastor John: Just by principle!

Santiago: Can't give him a ten because ten is perfect and he's just not perfect. I'm sorry. What I wrote down was that God had spoke to these women and the men in these sermons most of them were like Jacob and Nabal, you know, they were like horrible. In that you could still take something out, because the fact that Jacob did not pay attention to Leah, and she did everything possible in her power to try to make him love her. She just went out of her way and still was no. And, I found it interesting that Jacob had deceived Esau, got deceived himself later on, because supposedly he paid too much with the seven years so you figure she was probably worth four years and he paid four more years and he gave six years of extra years. So he kind of got beat. But, just the fact that I put myself in that situation so you can always take something away from Jacob and Nabal. I gave him an eight because of the fact of I just thought like she said I would never give a ten and I wouldn't give a nine because that is just to close to the ten. That's just the way that I think. You know if I grade, I grade hard. It's not so much that I didn't enjoy actually I did enjoy the sermon. And I actually numbered all four of them because when I was listening to them in tape, the widow of Zarephath, I had said "didn't he preach them on that day" and I was saying to Rasheeda, so I actually remembered the sermons and I remember the Sundays that he did them. But again, you tend to get more out the second or the third time that you hear them. Besides what Bob said that he goes low and you can't hear him. But, besides that I think it was real good.

Bob: Is that why you gave an eight instead of a nine.

Santiago: Because I would never give him a ten because my nine would actually be a ten.

Rasheeda: Well, I gave Pastor Tim a ten because I just...listening to the sermon you could tell there was a lot of preparation put into the sermon. And then when you come into the church and listening to the sermon. A lot of time, by Sunday, you come in

just dragging from the previous week, and just listening to his sermon just lift me up and helps me with my daily walk with the Lord. So his sermons really do help me and that is why I gave him a ten.

Ralph: Using this numerical scale 1-10, why were the negatives not included? No just kidding. I gave him a ten also, although there are things that I would have added periodically though, not that often, things that I would think of that would have been added to the sermon. A ten is still well deserved because simply put, if I were a pastor, and I was to present a message to an audience of believers, I would do it the exact same way. Maybe I would add a few more profound thought than what he does.

Pastor John: By the way if there is anything else that we did not touch on now is your opportunity.

Santiago: When I did my grading I did not include the time and effort. I just included by the moment.....but now that Ralph and Rasheeda spoke of the effort involved.....he will now change his grade to a nine. Because what she said about when he presents his sermon you can see the time and effort involved. A lot of things he brings up about the internet or what he read; a percentage or a book or the library. But, most of the time he starts a sermon with situation so I will change it to a nine.

Ralph: I remember back in high school our gym teacher put on the bulletin board, and I remember going to gym class and reading that athletes are not born they are made. I argued with that then, and I will argue that now. I believe that athletes are born and not made. And you know a lot of times God inspires all of us, and some of us have abilities and talents, and there is no doubt that Pastor Tim has a talent and a passion. And that passion is evident in his messages. And you either relate to that or you don't. And as far as I am concerned he was born with that talent. Was he made in that talent? Well, you know God gave him that. It is also his personality, who he is, how he conducts himself, how he carries himself and he just happens to click, at least for me. And there are other talented pastors out there but they just don't happen to click with me. So that is why he gets a ten!

Santiago: That's true what he said about athlete's you know. Let's put it this way.....I think Pastor Tim preaches like I play baseball. That's a compliment. It's true what Ralph said. I think God controls him a certain part of his personality and his character. He realized that God had given him this talent and not just to satisfy at one point. He refined it and continues to do God's work, and not just be happy with it that certain way but to get better. I feel every time he preaches is that if you guys are giving him a ten, then he is trying to get an eleven.

Pastor John: Thank you very much.

Focus Group #4
Thursday, 8/12/04

Participants: Dennis Alabi, Margaret Perez, Rosemary Weidner, Todd Reilly, Fernando Rodriguez, April Garuccio, Carol Dyson, and Josh Goolcharan

1. Pastor John: *Just let me begin by saying ‘thank you very much’ to all of you for all of the time you put into before by listening to these sermons and for your time tonight. Again, Tim owes all of us a huge debt of gratitude. But we really do appreciate your time put into this. So let’s start off with questions and basically we need someone to kick us off but the first one is, you know, the stories. Uhhh, the sermons were based on sermons where the women were the main character. Do you think if you are a women that this helps you to relate to the sermons better? That you understood the messages or the import of the messages, the application o,f or just that you sympathize with the character more because you are a women? And, the opposite with the guys. Did you feel that you were in any way divorced from really identifying with the main character because it was a women or that it didn’t apply to you? Did you think it really mattered - the gender of the listener corresponding to the gender of the main character? What did you think?*

Carol: Well, as a woman I could relate to some of the lessons and some of the stories, but I did feel that the lessons to be learned from each of these stories could be applied to the lives of both men and women. God’s love doesn’t know any gender.

Pastor John: OK, so you didn’t think there was any difference at all?

Carol: Not for me.

Pastor John: Uh huh, okay.

April: I thought two were more relate-able to women and two were more relate-able to men. I believe that I thought that Abigail and Leah were more relate-able to women, not that men couldn’t learn something too. And the last two, the Widow of Zarephath and the Women taken in sin had more issues spoken of that would grab a man’s attention more.

Pastor John: Could you specify more of why you think that Leah and Abigail.....you related to more as a woman?

April: Well, I know that in Abigail, they spoke of a women being married to a fool and ummm.....it was so painfully close to my life. So, helpful, too. Painful to hear, but so helpful. It just reiterated all that I had lived for the last fifteen or sixteen. And to the glory that she stemmed the damage and submitted isn’t caving in, and submission is an active act, and she submitted to God’s authority rather than she rose above. And then, Leah of course I was quite drawn to because, “it was me!”

Fernando: I think the first three, The Widow of Zarephath, Abigail and Leah, were mostly for women. The last one, I think, was more general and there's more a sermon for everyone. But I think the first three were.....as a man there was more.

Todd: It didn't make any difference to me. I just felt like if it was.....men require love too, like in the case of Leah, men, you can be ditched or you can be considered a second class citizen, too. If you're not married, you can be looked at as second class.

April: Yeah, but in the reference of Leah repeatedly getting pregnant, that is clearly a female deal.

Todd: Yeah, sure.

April: You know many, many women have had band-aid babies, just hoping that this one will tie it together.

Margaret: You know, I read the question a little differently. I read it as 'do I relate to it more to a story because the character is a female?' The way that I answered, it was, 'I don't think that I do, in general.' Sometimes I think, though, that I can personally relate to a character more if I can see how a women.....like I had the same impression as you, [looking at April] that Leah, I had written down, I thought in general a women could relate to Abigail and Leah typically more than a man might. But that's not what I've written here. But in general, I feel like I can relate to the males. I think there's a message.....there's a message for everyone.

Pastor John: Rosemary, what did you think?

Rosemary: I think like they say that the first and second.....the last one..... but, Leah touched me a lot.....because I see something happen, the same as life, as Leah and everything she went through in her relationship to make her husband love her. As Pastor Tim said, we want people's love and she did all this sacrifice you know to get the love of the husband. So I was very bothered that she didn't. And the widow, she listened and she followed the directions. Her obedience, it's for everybody, because it was obedience to the Lord. Especially since he was a stranger; she never saw that man before. And, he said, "Give me bread and water." And he said not just water. He said, "No, (give me) bread too." She never saw that man.

Fernando: She was a single mom, too. I think single moms are extraordinary. That's why I think the Widow of Zarephath, you know.....it didn't surprise me that she was so intelligent and so decisive and had such a tremendous faith. I was raised by a single mother, and I married a single mother, and I highly respect single mothers.....so it didn't surprise me to hear this story. I wasn't surprised.....

Pastor John: By marrying her (Marisol, his wife), you disqualified her from being a single mom [Laughter].

Rosemary: The faith that she had, and the climate was dry, and the food. When you have the last bread and someone wants to take that bread away from you, I wanna' hit you with the bread. So in my situation I would give the bread to somebody? What do you think? It was faith what she did, it was faith. So, as a women.....

Carol: But she had to have known the Lord because he told her that God had told him to tell her to do this. So, she did know the Lord, and she must have had enough faith in God to know that he does keep his promises. So, she did take that step of faith.

April and Rosemary: We didn't think that she even knew the Lord that Elijah was speaking of, that didn't have any relationship with the Lord.

Carol: I thought that she recognized that Elijah was a religious man.

April: Yeah, she saw that he was a prophet and he was well fed. He wasn't from the area where they lived.

Fernando: I disagree with that. I agree with Carol, there was a strong faith in God in her and in the end when she saw the results she said, "You truly are a man of God." I think.....and I think that if she was not in touch with God.....I don't think she would have.....

Carol Dyson: I was under the impression that she knew God.

Pastor John: Well, her acts sure showed that she was open to it because we are not given the psychology that goes along with it we are given the acts. She's obviously open and does as Rosemary says. There's something quite extraordinary, that at the risk of your own family's health you can cooperate. Dennis what did you think?

Dennis: OK, reading that first question.....the very first thing that came to my mind was when Pastor Tim said that the series was going to be on women, Umm, I was like.....OK, I'm gonna' be in church for the next few weeks.....is going to be all about women. I was wondering what I was gonna' be listening to and (wondering) what I was going to receive from the sermon. I can't remember which one it was, the first one, maybe, it was Leah at the end of that sermon I was really carried away. I knew that the sermon wasn't just for women. You know that was interesting.....that was an indication I didn't think that the sermon was just for women.....However it was just mainly for women. From then on, it was just like a regular sermon for me, it was more like something I could learn from what the subject was all about.

Pastor John: Josh, what do you think?

Josh: Well, for me, like Dennis, I was like "OK, this isn't going to be anything that is going to apply to me." But after listening to it, the widow one, and the women caught in sin, and especially Leah for me. I realized I could apply these things in my life, so.....well.....that they just seemed to talk to me. So, I thought they were good.

2. Pastor John: *By the way, what we'll do, we do need to get all of your opinions.....so we will make our way around the table. It doesn't have to be in order or anything like that. But when we do get through the questions. If there is anything that you feel of real importance that we didn't cover we will have time at the end to just throw everything else in. Because these questions just help focus your ideas and opinions but we really don't limit the ideas to them. I think that question five is kinda' a grab-bag question, so we can get everything in at that time. Dennis has started to lead us into the second question, when he talked about his first impression when he heard about the series on women. So, I need to ask you that when you first heard of this series if you had any initial impressions. And then once you were in it how you felt about listening to a series on women?*

Josh: Well, like I already said, I thought it was going to be a waste of time. But after listening to it, I realized I could apply a lot of it to my life.

Margaret: I was pretty indifferent, I didn't think anything more or less 'cause it's a series on women. Umm.....but I did enjoy, and I have been enjoying this series, and I felt that I got.....kinda' got a different perspective on the story other than when I read it myself or heard a sermon on it myself. And some of the stories were from a different perspective. And it was from getting into how the woman was feeling in the story and I really did like that. Most of the stories I don't think I read that way before or heard that way before.

Carol: I liked listening to the messages on women and I think the lessons that I learned were very helpful for my walk with the Lord. They reinforced a lot of things I already knew, but it's good to have these words repeated every once in a while.....a lot of times we forget about them or we overlook them.....and I also particularly liked as always, not just in this series, but the way that Tim sets up the history of what was going on at the time. Sometimes he puts his own feelings into how the woman was thinking or this is why she was in that place at a certain time. And it just makes it very interesting and it keeps you listening and I think that that's a very good thing. And the stories became very interesting.

Pastor John: And if you had of received a postcard, how would it have struck you that we were doing a series on women?

Carol: My first reaction probably would have been, "Oh, this is good we don't hear too much about women in the Bible." We hear about Mary and.....uhh..... some of the others but.....uhh.....this was real different.

Rosemary: It was very good and I want to say "thank you" to Pastor Tim for all the time he spent to prepare when he talks about women. And I enjoy it a lot and I want to apply what I learn from the sermon in my daily life as a Christian women. And there is one thing; it was.....I think it was in the last one, about his visit of Mary of Magdalene. And he said, "It's good to have a balance." And sometimes.....he mother, no Mary. And that really helped me a lot; because the spiritual is more important than material things.

But everything is applied to my life as a woman. It was very interesting. If I got a postcard I would say, “I want to see this! I wonder what he has for me!”

Todd: Umm, similar to them, I thought, “OK, this is going to be about women’s issues’ or about men, how to deal with your wives.” I thought, “Oh well, maybe I’ll just read my Bible” and then I found in sermons, even Leah and Abigail, the ones that people felt were very “woman-centric;” I felt it was very human condition. Umm.....because, even with Abigail, you know, you’re married to a nudge, and you have to submit.....well, you can have an idiot boss you have to submit to. So, umm.....what I did was, how I looked at it was it was human condition. That’s how I felt these sermons were. It was human condition. And it was just how it affected that particular person at that particular time; it was an illustration. But the principal was applicable to both genders.

Pastor John: Dennis, did you want to say more? You hinted a little bit at your answer in your last answer....

Dennis: Actually, I think this series started on Mother’s Day. So I expected that the sermon of course for that day would be on women but I didn’t know it was going to be more of a series. If I had received a postcard about this series, believe me I would have gone to another church that Sunday.

Rosemary: The husband abuses the wife but a lot of times the wife abuses the husband too.

April: So humans abuse humans [ALL AGREE].

Rosemary: As a Christian sometimes we are fooled. People see us but they don’t know what’s going on.

April: Hurting people hurt people. I thought that the series was great. I had no idea what would be said because I know very little of the Bible, I’m brand-new. And I didn’t know there were.....that there were that many women to do a series on. I thought it was great.

Todd: I was a little surprised he didn’t do Ruth. Like the standards, like Ruth and Esther.

Pastor John: Well, this is what I was going to ask you. If you had a series on women you may have expected Eve, maybe Sarah, Ruth, Esther, Mary, right? So that’s what I was going to ask you. May that have been part of the expectation, OK; we’re going to get the usual. The fact that he picked Leah – you probably never heard a sermon on Leah, being that there is so little on her, or Abigail, does hearing some new stuff, does that liven up the series?

[ALL AGREE] Yes. Absolutely. Yes.

Pastor John: But like Carol Dyson said, it always good to reinforce the old stuff.

Carol: No, I meant the lessons learned. But, hearing about women who you never heard of or knew very little of, I thought was very good.

Fernando: Even the women in sin I think it was a powerful message about how God used a woman.....

April: And filling in the blanks - like talking about the cockroach. You know, that's very relate-able stuff. You get mental pictures.

Pastor John: Fernando, you said you'd hand it (the postcard) off to Marisol. Anything else on your reaction to receiving the postcard announcing the series?

Fernando: I was thinking about what the guys said and it's like a normal reaction. But then.....

April: Well, to Pastor Tim gave these little inserts every now and again, "Yeah you know I hope you men can bare with me with the bashing don't worry we're going to bash the women too."

3. Pastor John: *Well, what do you think is there a distinction between hearing a sermon on a character sketch as opposed to teaching? You know, the New Testament is very much made up of epistles, the letters of instructions. Do you find a difference in listening to one or the other?*

Todd: Well, if it's straight from scripture it's all expository. Whether it's Old Testament or New Testament 'cause you figure New Testament is not showing the laws and the commands "Thou shall" and "Thou shalt not." You look at Kings and the historical books even the prophetic books. Especially the historical books, they are stories and they are in the word of God and they are meant to instruct us just as much as the epistles are.

Pastor John: So as long as they're in the Bible.....But do you react differently to them though?

Todd: I personally love the Old Testament. I actually like it more than the New Testament.

Pastor John: Because.....?

Todd: God is more understandable to me in the Old Testament. I mean he seems more black and white, although I'm reading from the Old Testament now that God comes out with some really human statements that kind of throw me for a loop. Especially reading from the prophetic books. I've been a Christian for a while, you read from the prophetic books, it's very grandiose and you know incredible statements, and like Moses

asks God “Please let me go to the Promised Land” and God says “Shut up your not going,” in essence. And it was like I was taken back by that because it was almost like a human response, and it is helping me get a little different picture of God than I otherwise would have gotten.

Pastor John: But do you like the Old Testament better than the New because it’s mostly stories?

Todd: No, for an example I like the prophetic books. I like Isaiah.

Pastor John: Do you like it because it’s poetry and colorful? ‘Cause that’s what the prophets write.

Todd: And Psalms it’s poetry it’s colorful. I feel like the Old Testament is illustrated with principles. Principles are spelled out in the New Testament but they are illustrated in the Old Testament. One thing I really like about the Old Testament is the way that God honors His word. Because you see God says this and then prophecy is fulfilled. God says this and prophecy is fulfilled. God told Elijah the woman, you know go there, and I will provide and he did and it was fulfilled.

Pastor John: What else what do you guys think about the distinction between stories or teachings?

April: Well, I think using people-stories makes it more relatable and it touches on the many weaknesses and sins that we all share and it brings it into the year 2004. What happened then is happening now. The old, the new.

Josh: For me I liked the fact that he used character because he gave an example of how to apply that principle to your life. You may not have gone through that certain example but I found it more helpful than like, in Psalms, when it said “guard your heart.” How do you guard your heart?

Rosemary:everybody has difficult times like before Jesus and now.

Margaret: I had just written down all things being equal.....I find that Tim does an excellent job at taking letters and all that and relating it to the issues that we face everyday. So in that way, the help that stories give by relating your experiences, I think Tim does in his messages. So from that perspective I find it pretty much equal, but I don’t think all preachers can do that. That have the gift of doing that.

Carol: I agree with Margaret in the fact that I enjoy the stories particularly the way that Tim does it because he brings in things that I don’t know or that I am not aware of, or maybe something that happened before in another book and he’ll relate to passages in entirely different books that confirm the story, and it makes it more true because we see it has happened by somebody else. He brings it.....it’s almost like watching a video. He brings it more to life because he does relate it to today. I know sometimes I have trouble

understanding some of the passages and we also have another pastor [looking at John] who is great at explaining things in modern and up to date language, and we are lucky enough to have him in our Bible study so it does make a difference because I feel like I learn more and retain it better.

Dennis: Actually I listened to these tapes more than five times each. Every time that I listened to Chuck Swindol he cracks me up.....the way he describes stories is like he was actually there! So, the delivery of the sermons in the series was just impeccable.....you learn more from peoples stories.....it's all about our faith.....you know I really enjoyed the sermons being on characters.

Margaret: You know just to pick up on something, I don't know whether it's Pastor Tim's presentation but I find myself getting emotionally involved in the message and I like that. The pictures that he paints.

4. Pastor John: How do you feel about filling in the blanks?

April: It grabs your attention. It sparks your interest and this helps to understand the stories in an every way....sense.

Margaret: Well I like it, but I was trying to think back when I read this question whether it was any of these messages, because sometimes I feel it's just a little to much. It's like "enough already." I think it's good. I like the embellishment. I like the filling in the blanks, but sometimes I think it's a little overdone.....

Todd: [Agreeing] OK, I get the point.

Fernando: I don't know sometimes I get lost. Maybe it's my attention span, or how much I'm paying attention. So I try to come back, but sometimes it's over my head.

Pastor John: I have heard that sometimes you can lose attention during Pastor Tim's sermons.

Various voices: [Sounds of laughter]

Pastor John: Do you think that when you do come back you can easily pick up and still learn a bit?

Various voices: Oh yes, oh yes.

Pastor John: I mean in the sense that even if you lose track, there is still enough? I mean it's pretty rich.

Fernando: And that's why he does it.

Margaret: I don't get lost as much, and maybe this is leading into the next question. Sometimes it, I don't want to say "irritates" that sounds like a strong word, but, I mean, I still am listening, I'm still paying attention, but I'm kinda' like, you know, what am I supposed to do?

Rosemary: Like the last tape, I don't know if it was because the language, sometimes it's hard for me to understanding everything one hundred percent.

April: Really? [Sarcastic laughter].

Rosemary: Everything one hundred percent, you know that. So the last tape....when he started talking about the lady and he was in college or something and he was treating the husband and told him.....

Margaret: Oh yes.

Rosemary: And I began out very well. And then he began to talk about something else and I got completely lost. But when he started to talk about that.....about the Bible, I started getting it. But during that second point, I was, "Like what are you talking about?" Like I said, maybe this was because of language.

Pastor John: What do you guys think? We're on the fill-in-the-blank question. It's not specified in the text but he kinda' fills-in-the-blanks.

Josh: For me, it just helped me better understand where the people were coming from. Especially with the widow. When my mom was raising us for a couple of years as a single mom, I don't know if she would ever do that – like give another person something to eat if it was my last meal, so it just showed me the amazing faith that she had and it also captured my attention. I mean, I was listening.

Dennis: For me, I really do think.....personally, I thought for the message it come together. I actually timed him on all those messages, it was right the last one was the one he spent about 51 minutes. He was pretty much, he was trying to be in some of those stories, you can tell, you know, you can tell exactly what he's able to....All those things, all those things, all those blanks he was trying to fill in,you know I've done some research on some of those subjects, he wasn't really making things up speculations, observations.....to me it was more like.....I'm not to sure if you.....

April: I think his mind moves at a million miles an hour, and his lips can't keep up. And he says, S-s-s-s-s...sin.

Pastor John: Todd, you just said one word before, when you said sometimes, "Overblown." Were there any specific that you felt were overblown?

Todd: The woman at Zarephath. He was describing the famine, and it just seemed a little long, and I felt, like, "Alright, I get it. I get it."

Margaret: I thought of an example of what I was talking about. In the story of Leah, “Rachel who had and Leah who had not.” I thought it was repetitious. I mean, I thought the point was made well the first time he introduced it.

Rosemary: Even the book when you read it, you keep it open, she has the first baby, then another baby, then, the story of the.....of the two sisters, so, even the Bible when you read it, wow! Now I’m getting too much. As a Christian woman, how do you do that? Right? Now you get the maid to sleep with your husband, to get one more kid, to prove something. You say, “wow.” You know if something like that happened today.....

April: And no Saint Barnabas [local hospital], I might add.

Carol: I found these sermons to be very helpful to me and I learned a lot and I enjoy Tim’s sermons. I enjoyed these four. Very seldom, do I think Tim gets out of control, like he’s entitled to once in a while. As a whole, I think, I know I do, and everyone that we bring who hears Tim speak feels the same way. They enjoy hearing him speak, they learn something.

April: His passion. He’s passionate.

5. Pastor John: *Carol has kinda’ led us into question five: Is there anything helpful or distracting (in the sermons). And like I said, and I think Margaret is right, “irritating” might be too strong a word, but anything that you think can be tweaked. Anything that you found that might be a helpful suggestion. We’ve come across a couple already, like people have said, “OK, I get the point already...”*

Margaret: You know I didn’t write that down as irritating. I was forgiving.....

Pastor John: OK, like “overdone.”

April: I didn’t find anything irritating.

Todd: When he sights statistics, I’m very leery. Statistics are used by lots of people for lots of purposes. I’m leery of statistics when they are quoted. When they say, for instance, that twelve percent of all women are battered. And I’m not doubting that, but I’m like, well, what’s the source? I don’t know, I tend when people throw statistics at me, I turn them off.

Margaret: What was that statistic about more Avon ladies...than what?

April: Than Christians, right?

Rosemary:when he was talking about the beauty.....

Someone: No, than military men in Brazil!

Todd: Just like....where is he getting that? When he states statistics, I always like to hear the source.

April: I don't think you just make that stuff up.

Todd: No, you don't make it up, but I like to know the source.

April: Now that is when I'd say, "now this is very irritating" – that he quotes the source to every stat!

Dennis: Exactly!

Todd: Well, you say, "According to this they say that..."

Carol: Well, most of the time he gives an author's name if he's quoting something from a book.

Rosemary: I think he's great.

Margaret: Yeah, I think he grabs your attention. At least he does for me.

Rosemary: I love how he preaches, and he teaches at the same time. And he brings the different books of the Bible.....and I've been here for a little while and I never saw him preach – he talks about the Bible and teaching us...its not about finances and prosperity, it's about our life. And I come from a church there wasn't a day, all of the time it was about finances...money, money, money....and prosperity. And I finally said, "This is enough." But, I think he's a great, great pastor and a great man of God.

Pastor John: OK, is there anything else that was real helpful or real good in this series of messages?

Margaret: What Carol said earlier, I really enjoy – and I've told him this – that the historical context, that really puts the story in perspective for me. So I look for that and I really like it when he includes that. I like how he starts with a current day story or a statistic, as I mentioned earlier, 'cause I think that grabs your attention and you're curious to how that's going to relate to point. As I said before, I like getting emotionally involved. And I like how all it builds up to the main message at the very end, that I can summarize in one or two sentences, but it all builds to that and it all makes sense when you hear that.

April: Yeah, that's what I wrote down. "The helpful side was how God honored these women with such hardships through their faith."

Carol: Another thing that Tim does, normally does, is that he'll pinpoint #1, #2, #3 or he'll say, "There's four lessons to be learned. Number 1 is..." and he'll go on spell

that out. But you can take notes and so that you'll end up with those four points that you can actually refer to.

April: He's a good teacher.

Rosemary: When he talks about situation in life, our experiences, our goals, our trials, and what God calls us to expect in faith.....

Fernando: Listening to the four tapes I thought I went through like a roller coaster of feelings from embarrassment, to questions, to excitement, all kinds of stuff in all the different stories. And sometimes it's irritating, because you become a target of his words, of his message. You kinda' [he makes gesture to hide], like he was looking at you.

Pastor John: And that can be a good thing. Now's your chance, Josh.

Josh: I just like how he uses modern examples to show me that that stuff does happen.

April: I don't think that any words that are spoken unless you're ready to receive a revelation will affect you at all. You can sit in a sermon and have them wash right over you and fall asleep. Nothing can touch you unless you are ready to be touched.

6. Pastor John: *OK, let's go on to the last question; and I like I said, after we're done with this last question if there is anything else that anyone of you want to say that was not covered in these questions we'll discuss that. How would you grade it? And that kinda' just gives us a feel for your assessment of the series. And then, why? And I have to tell you, a lot of people have gone, "OK, I gave it an eight because I don't give ten's and nine's."*

Pastor John: Who would like to join in first?

Josh: I gave it a seven because I thought that three of the sermons were very helpful, but one wasn't.

Pastor John: Which one did you not find helpful?

Josh: ????

Dennis: I gave it a ten. My dad was a pastor for forty years, a pastor of a church of.....Charles Stanley.

April: Ten and especially Abigail which was so painful to hear and comforting at the same time.

Todd: Six and a half.

Pastor John: Which is just a passing grade.

Todd: I liked the sermons; nothing really struck me or hit me. A lot of it was reinforcement. When it tended to be really women-centric issues I tended to tune-out. But when it was generally applicable I thought it was.....

Fernando: I think as men, in my experience, I don't have women-issues. The stories as I listen to them, it takes me back to my home life and to the women who have touched me in life. I was raised by a single mother, and these four tapes left such a.....they had such strong faith.....an appreciation, and a compassion. So, if anything I was touched deeply.....

Rosemary: I gave it a ten. I loved it, all tapes. And especially, when he was explaining about how Leah looks, I was weeping. Like I was sitting, Leah there, the beauty of her sister, and trying to say about Leah being so smart. Everything about it. I love it. I think that's great.

Carol Dyson: I gave them a ten. And I think that even though some of these short stories were directly related to women and women's things, a man can learn from them, too. For if a man understands sometimes how a woman thinks or what a woman likes and dislikes, and what a woman expects, they can have a better marriage. So, I think that they can be helpful in that way.....

April: When she had the fourth child.....wanted for us to change our focus. And if our eyes are where they should be, then these disappointments in life will be less. Not to say that you won't have disappointments, but all your eggs won't be in the wrong basket. That was a powerful message, for men and women.

Margaret: I was wishy-washy. I always find in Tim's messages, something of interest in a message. I don't think I've ever not. I wrote down a nine or a ten, and the reason I didn't give a 10 is, and I know I'm not supposed to compare, but, I've listened to Tim for years – and some messages are really “aha” like eye-opening. Like really hit ya'. None of these like, totally hit me. I mean, some of the things were good reminders, or a looking at a new perspective, or looking at something a little different. But none of them really smacked me, like I have been smacked by Tim. That's why I didn't give a solid ten.

Margaret: Yeah, I agree. I always worry about that too, Dennis. Someone else is going to steal him away. I think we're very spoiled with the messages.

Pastor John: Well, is there anything else that has not been said that needs to be said?

Dennis: Yeah, I wonder why he didn't do a sermon on characters like Jezebel. Why did he do so-and-so, just these women?

Pastor John: Well, it was a selected bunch. Like we said, he didn't do some that may have been expected, like Esther, Ruth, Jezebel, Hannah. It was only a selected bunch.

Fernando: I was curious about listening to the women's opinions about how you felt about receiving a message about women from a man. That's a tough job for a guy.

Margaret: I think that Tim is in tune with people in general. I never find that he's not in tune with women. I've never gotten that. I think he's real sensitive to issues that people face, both men and women. Coming from Tim, it didn't faze me. If it came from someone else it might, but that didn't faze me. I didn't sit there thinking, "Oh, he's just not in touch with women."

April: I think one of the greatest things I heard was.....I'm from a Catholic background, so the priests would point their fingers and wouldn't consider themselves down on the ranks with us, they were elevated. One day he was talking about "why do men talk to you like this...why do you men do this, why do I do this?" I don't know what he was talking about, but he made a statement, "why do we men do this? Why do I do this?" And when he included himself in that, and he does that often, he brings himself right on the floor with us, sinner – sinner, everyone is a sinner, we all need help, we all need the Lord, and I just find that to be very refreshing and humbling and beautiful.

Rosemary: When he was telling us about driving the car and the policeman stopped him and gave him a ticket! I love that story. He's in the same place, we are all the same; we are all sinful. That's great. We're all together. We're all in the same boat. We just need help, one for another.

Fernando: I was just wondering, as I was listening to Tim, if I was listening to a woman, how would I receive it? I feel I have an advantage listening to a woman's series from a man, because he doesn't stop being a man by talking about woman's issues. So I was tuned in to how he was trying to kinda' be sensitive to the woman...from the perception of a male's mind. And that helped me to sympathize with the women...

Carol Dyson: Like someone said before he is a very sensitive person, and he realizes the problems that people have today. And he has that distinct ability to compare today's things to what story he's trying to relate. And I think a Christian that can relate a story as he does whether male or female, we can be listening to the story and not even realize as a male that it is coming from a female. If they're saying it with the same kind of emotion, that it's a non-gender emotion, is what I'm saying. You're looking at it 'cause you see him as a man there, instead of, if you closed your eyes and just listened, if the person is presenting themselves with facts and emotion and understanding of the subject, then it doesn't really matter if it's a male or female. To me it doesn't really matter. Because they make it personal, I think.

Pastor John: Thanks.

Focus Group #5
Thursday, 8/26/04

Participants: Jessica Rimelis, Lisa Thomas, Tina Anton, Michael Anton

1. Pastor John: Did gender play a part in your impression of the series?

Lisa: I don't think whether the story was about a man or a woman that affects me differently. I think it is the meaning or the message in the story that affects me. Like I personally struggled with that issue. Like the other day when we were talking about the warrior. Oh, I want to be a warrior. And I wasn't a man so there were certain things that in the women's series that touched me personally and then there were other things that I couldn't identify with at all because I had never experienced that as a woman. That's what I think is really the pinch-point for me, so.

Tina: You word it differently than me. I think about it very differently but I wrote this down.....I think the message is to be taken differently by male or female if it is being specifically talking about a woman and how she should behave. Let's say what a role is, to me, it is the same thing if he is talking in general like even the women in the four series that we did. I was trying to fit in how would a man look at this? Well, if they were in the same situation, they would have probably done the same thing. With the exception of the one, the women caught in sin. But other than that, if the message was about women and what their role as a woman she should be, or how she should dress, or what kind of role model she should be to her children, especially to her daughters, or as a wife. It's directly talking to a woman. And then vice a versa when they would be talking to a man. But, with this you could almost fit the man into the situation and then take it from there.

Jessica: Umm, I think for me it made the understanding slightly easier because I could see myself in her shoes. More than I could put myself into a man's shoes. Even though.....

Tina: Well, I also put myself in the women's shoes and I understood their role and what decisions that they had to make. But, I also was trying to look at it from a man's take on this. What's so different for me than would be for a man?

Jessica: Umm, yeah, it was just easier for me to imagine it for me from a woman's shoes.

Michael: Umm, again I believe that sort of in the areas of that, within reason, a lot of these messages related to women. I can apply to with some respect to myself whether in reference to sin or disobedience or just certain attitudes of the heart. I don't think that mattered whether they were men or women. However, that sort of, in a general sense. However, when you get specific in certain analogies that Pastor Tim used, very specific examples, I can see where there are some examples where a woman's role is defined in a specific way that I think sometimes is lost today. I think we live in a world where, we

like to generalize equality in a number of ways, the world we live in today. But, in some sense it is not God's understanding or my understanding of God's desire. I think specific roles as a wife or a mother or as a woman I see specific responsibilities or obligations as a man that are a little bit different than a woman. And sometimes when we mix that today, and I am glad to see some of those things that Pastor Tim has detailed in his messages. But, I think somehow if we don't separate that and miss it, I think we can fall into the secular thinking of everything is the same. Equality works just because it is supposed to work. And although it should be, there are certain areas where it works but I don't think in this particular, in these messages, there are differences, but at the end of the day for me, if there is a point about disobedience or sin I was able to relate to it. Again, so depending on how specific the role is that we are talking about, or the example of sin. So, I can kinda' go either way. But I think man's heart is similar whether it be man or women.

Tina: With the exception of the role of the women the message is the same.
[Everyone agreed.]

Pastor John: Do you think out of all of the sermons which was the one that you think a woman could relate to better than a man? Was there any one? There were some that the characters went through that were distinctly uniquely a female's experience.

Tina and Lisa: Leah.

Michael: With the childbearing when they related.

Lisa: Well, men just don't feel like that. They don't feel like "I'm the ugly duckling, when will my husband love me?"

Tina: Men just don't do that.

Pastor John: Do you think that.....do you even just look at the story of Abigail, and ask yourself the question, "is she being submissive?" How does a women view this question as compared to how a man views this question?

Tina: That was a little confusing because we are supposed to.....umm.....before you do anything of that magnitude, what she did, you are supposed to ask permission from your husband. She went ahead and did it and in the end she saved her husbands life. So, you take different measures for different occasions. [There is an explosion of voices here]. You react to what you think is best but sometimes what I think is best is not what really is best.

Pastor John: I'm asking even before that. I mean not necessarily when you look at the story of Abigail but do you even bring up the issue of submission like brought up in the text? So, to ask that question, how does a woman react to, you just ask the question, "Gee, is Abigail even being submissive?" Does a woman listen closely to that question?

Is it? What do you think? I don't know. I'm not a woman so I am just asking your opinion on it.

Lisa: I think that they do. I can't speak generally for all women but I think for me personally. I have been very confused since the day that I read about submission. This is all new to me. I have not been a Baptist for a long time and in our women's study group we read a lot about submission and you know we were all like choking with it, but really trying to understand what she was saying [the Bible study teacher] and what God is asking of us and what this term submission really meant. And it seemed to me that at that time we all agreed that you know we just need to "suck it up" ladies. God wants us to listen to our husbands. God doesn't want us to, and she gave very specific examples too, about you know, if your husband says to do this then you just do it! You don't ask, you don't blink, you just do it.

Tina: Well, I didn't agree with a lot of the stuff that she had to say. [Tina was referring to comments by a women's Bible study leader earlier in the year].

Lisa: Well, it was hard. A lot of us were just like.....a lot of us were just choking on it. But, we did just acknowledge that was what was expected of us. And Pastor Tim in his sermon just flipped it around completely.

Pastor John: So in a sense this actually.....you answered the question when you said if it was on directly roles that pertain to women. So, when you ask that question, was she being submissive? All of a sudden this heads down, detailing something that is a little different than a man's perspective. Where, as for instance, my feeling is that this is a charged topic. So when a woman hears the whole question of submission you all of a sudden.....ears go up. They want to hear this. Where as a guy is maybe going, "Oh, I don't know, I don't want to hear about this."

Tina: Well, submission is.....

Lisa: We want to understand it too, because we have a hard time dealing with that, that is really what he meant. You know what I mean that that is really what the Bible expects. It's hard for us to think that that's true so we really want to get a kind of more.....

Tina: But see, if submission, if you are not in sync with your partner. If he doesn't understand what submission means. And I am reading this book and if my husband is not a Christian, and he's not going to treat me a certain way, then why would I submit to someone who doesn't understand what my role is to begin with is or what his role is. So, submission is very difficult to understand unless you are both in the same state of mind, as far as what to expect.

Pastor John: So, we talked about Leah the giving birth and you might think you'd get a different reaction from the men about and the thing that you brought up Lisa, and I thought of it too actually, the whole ugly duckling kind of thing. You know in our

culture guys don't deal with that much we get away with our personalities. It doesn't matter if you are that good looking or not.

Lisa: Or if you are intelligent, or successful, or if you make a lot of money than that is great.

2. Pastor John: *Now, there can be or are some things and I am sure you would agree that I am sure we can relate to that. But, still it is a whole different ball game. And so like Mike broke it down, there are general things that we can all relate to. But there are some specific things, really.....we don't have the same sensitivity to it I guess. So, anyway very, very good. So onto the second question. How did you feel about listening to a series of messages on women? Let's think of it in the two instances. If you had of received a postcard in the mail prior to it. Let's answer that question first.*

Tina: Well, I would have been interested in it, anything that had to do with improving or bettering yourself I would have thought "Oh sure I would be interested in listening to it." It would be interesting.

Michael: I agree, as a man I looked forward to listening to messages that relate to men or women because, again, I go back to what Lisa had said. I think a lot of us at times are not sure or don't understand exactly what God's expectations are of us individually. We joke a lot about how we're different and so on and now there is a message that kind of unpacks and defines what God is expecting of me as a man so I didn't want to miss it. And I find that all so very fascinating when I hear messages in relation to women so that I can also better understand as a man. God sort of testing my understanding of a woman's role or challenges that they have today and how it relates to my life. Specifically what that means to me as a believer.

Jessica: I thought it was very interesting because it wasn't such a traditional approach.

Lisa: I thought it would be interesting because it would have been instructional. 'Cause like I said, I'm new at this, and I am always trying to find out what does God wants me to do. And if he is talking directly to me than that is great. Spelling it right out.

Pastor John: Now after having listened to it...how did you feel about listening to a series on women? Most of you anticipated and said, "Good I want to hear of this I want to learn about this." OK, now having heard it how do you feel? Did it live up to your expectation? Disappointed?

Lisa: I thought it exceeded it. And that would be because Pastor Tim just really knows how to pick a Bible story and relate to every day issues that women are really struggling with every day. You know like physical abuse. You know, like personal, real deep stuff. Like not feeling loved by your husband and this isn't stuff that you walk

around talking about. And he really has a way of finding that one story that's gonna' speak to you.

Tina: I felt the same way. I was more inspired, and I understood better, and I put myself in their places by listening to it and the way that he explained it, it would make me really put myself in that situation to understand it better.

Pastor John: If you were to hear.....you get this postcard in the mail, there is going to be a series on character of women in the Bible. Did he do the characters you would have expected? Or who would you have expected him to do. Was there anybody left out?

Lisa: I can't remember all the one's that he did. Did he talk about Eve?

Pastor John: He did. He started off with Eve, the first one....He did that on Mother's Day.

Tina: There was no one from the New Testament.

Pastor John: Mary and the women taken in sin.

Lisa: Oh that's right.

Tina: I would think Mary because she played a big role in Jesus' life and also to clarify what her role was, is, should have been even after his death. And what is to be expected after her death and she is to be honored, but a lot of people think that she should be put before Jesus.

Jessica: Yeah, I haven't really heard a lot because I was raised Catholic and Mary is glorified by the Catholic people and I have a hard time knocking her down a few pegs when I first came here.

Michael: Same with us also being from a Catholic background, and umm.....that was a challenge for us. But at the same time it also helped me realize what true worshipping is versus honoring, or respecting, or appreciating. This is really to glorify Christ because no one comes to the Father before me and that really started to open my eyes. Although Mary is an example, Mary is a wonderful model, you can never lose sight of that. It is just that I am not going to pray to Mary as I was raised to believe. So.....

Tina: But, they also.....because she was the Mother of God.....they also forget that she knew what she had to go through. She knew that this is what He had to do but they felt like she endured so much. Of course, yes, she did endure all that pain, but she knew that this was why they chose her.

Lisa: Well, she didn't have a choice, they chose her. She is getting all this glory for enduring all this pain, but.....

Tina: That is why I think that that should have been in one of these sermons also to really explain her role in all of this.

Pastor John: Were there any like I said, if you saw biblical women.....any that were left out that you would have thought would typically be covered? Like Eve and Mary.

Michael: I was thinking of Mary Magdalene because that deals a little bit with forgiveness and sin. And dealing with, some people are struggling with guilt and repentance. I think if you look at the Mary Magdalene story realize that, gee.....if that situation can be dealt with, then how are we any different? So a lot of times certain real life stories are not just a sermon in any case but a real life story. Look at what happened to Mary Magdalene. How does that relate to me.

Tina: She was like a sinner, and from a sinner, she became totally changed.

Pastor John: So were there any surprises like for instance, like Ruth or Esther those are the type of people from the Old Testament. Hannah, Sarah? But were you surprised by some of the choices? Did you know about Abigail before the sermon?

Michael and Tina: Not as much.

Tina: Actually, I did learn a lot because you don't read much all of these. Like you said Ester you read about.

Michael: I personally, because I don't gravitate to Old Testament as much as I should. So it was helpful.

Pastor John: So the Women of Zarephath, Abigail, Leah umm.....it is interesting in the sense do you feel you learn more from the stories that you don't know that well? Or the women caught in adultery? People are familiar with that story. You learn more from new passages done over or the old stories.

Tina: At this point, yes, because every time you hear something new you are learning something. You don't forget the old but maybe it is being reinforced.

Michael: Every time I hear a message on something that I thought I understood it always opens up a whole different additional window for me to. Wow! OK. I never thought of this point, and so in both scenarios I just continue to absorb the word whether it is new, or old, better.

Tina: The only thing that left me a little confused was the story with Leah and Rachael. That was sort of new to me and even though she did what she did and came to

understand that God did love her, and she didn't need any acceptance from any one else, or from her husband, I was very confused by the whole as to how they could do that. For seven years and then he tricked her and all of that.

Lisa: He explained it though, he was real good. That's what I mean, he explains about.....

Tina: That's what I mean. But still, I put myself in her place like I did with all the characters. How could I expect someone to love me if I tricked him? You didn't choose me, and so that left me a little confused that the father could even do that. And that Jacob would stick with it. If it was someone else he would have ran. And he didn't.

Lisa: That was the law at the time. It was kind of the way it was.

3. Pastor John: *Okay let's go on to the next one. How did you find listening to sermons from people's lives? This is the question: Is there a distinction between listening to sermons preached on stories based on people or sermons from teaching?*

Michael: Well, I think stories can be very powerful because they are real events that are real situations that occurred. That even back in you relate to the reason, although Psalms and Paul did a fantastic job for me in helping me to imagine and think through them.....think through some of the messages of some of the points that are.....But, I think in a real life story when you think back that this really happened. This is exactly how it happened. And how does it relate to me or to someone else. I find those to be very powerful.

Lisa: So do I. I have to say that's what brought me to this church. That is what made us leave the Roman Catholic Church. Sam and I would look at each other and the priest would say "A letter to Paul from the Corinthians," and Sam and I would go, "Who are the Corinthians." We were totally lost. We didn't understand what it was that the message was at all. To me there was no message. With these stories it's like especially when he gets into character sometimes and actually becomes the person I mean, you really feel that and you really feel what is going on. And you won't forget what you have felt in your bones. You remember it. I like the stories a lot better. I like the stories a lot better. There is no comparison for me.

Tina: It helps me to understand it is not distracting to me at all. It actually it makes it more interesting.

Jessica: I feel actually on a personal level that it helps to actually know these characters.

4. Pastor John: *I was reading somewhere about stories how they stick with you and you don't have to have an immediate connection. It sticks with you.....even if it clicks with you later on, whereas if you are hearing reason, logic you can't remember all this*

intrinsic logic.....Well good. The question of Pastor Tim filling in the blanks, again, did you find it a help? Did it distract? Any specific sermons that it did distract?

Lisa: What do you mean exactly by "filled in the blanks?" Can you clarify that a little bit? Do you mean like when he gets into character?

Pastor John: One of the examples is the women caught in adultery and you have eleven verses and it is the women brought out to Jesus by the Pharisees. And Tim says "Let's imagine this is what happens. It's the festival of the booths, and your husband is away on business. It's been I don't know when was the last time I heard him say I love you and the last time I felt his touch." That's what I mean is filling in the blanks.

Tina: He is adding onto to the story.

Lisa: That stuff is great. That is what helps me to remember. I read the Bible and sometimes it doesn't stick with me the same way as if I hear the same message in a sermon because all those things and how you are just feeling what that person was feeling. You remember what that person was feeling when you go out into the world. You just remember that colorful story.

Tina: When you are reading, and I guess because we didn't go to seminary school, it's very hard and sometimes I say, "I don't understand it" but you read it anyway. But the way that he fills in the blanks you imagine it and you can kind of like, imagine what it would look like and how it took place. So you can understand it better because he also gives the history and the customs. Okay I understand why they did it. Otherwise, you think, "Wow these people are totally crazy."

Lisa: And you understand why they did it. It just doesn't have any meaning for you, like if I read the Bible and I don't know about background I'm like "So why did they clean his feet?"

Tina: That's what I mean too, that we don't know but to add and to fill in the blanks is great because it helps you to see it.

Michael: I have to agree and again, it helps you to visualize and understand the specifics back then. I think the only constructive criticism I would have is there have been a couple of times where too much time was spent, and when he got back to the specific point it may have just missed it, going back to read the passage again. You know he does such a wonderful job of building your imagination that I may be still back there when he is moving on into the next point. I mean tell me about that historical event again. So, if it were just a little tighter in that area. But you need it.

Tina: But, that's personal. You got lost in what he was saying.

Michael: But this is just me.....it, me..... but it is just so powerful the way that he does that. But it is so helpful. He does it so well that I am still caught up with the original story in it.

Lisa: He is really good at it.

Pastor John: Jessica is shaking her head yes.

Jessica: Yeah, I agree with him, because a lot of times he will go back to the story and I say “well wait a second.”

Lisa: It takes a couple minutes; it takes a few sentences for you to say “all right, that’s where I was.”

Michael: I don’t want to jump ahead but whether it is filling in the blanks or having an example or an analogy, I think sometimes having a proper amount of time spent on it, an example or a real life analogy or filling in the blanks is important. Because again it is a continuity, a concentration, a focus that we all have to keep. To really get it, [he snaps his finger] to really.....that’s the point. How does this connect to me at the end of the message? Sometimes, we will walk out and have a discussion and say that “Hey that was interesting about that story” or about that example because it was so good. But the heart of the message may get sometimes....weak a little bit. Rarely does that happen but it’s happened.

Tina: Well, I’m thinking and I know I shouldn’t be doing this. But, sometimes I think of my kids and I say to myself, “I hope they are listening,” or “are they listening or are they wondering?”

Michael: He catches their attention.

Tina: Because he does that, like with the imagination of the tents and the parties, and this and that, I’m thinking, “they’re listening because they are interested.” Because I know my kids. So, sometimes I’m wondering, they’re not sitting with me, “are they really listening and paying attention because they aren’t sitting with me? Are they doodling?” But, I think that it helps the young people, too. It’s beneficial for them, too.

Pastor John: So, do you.....this is a little different but you have mentioned this with your answers. Not just with names you know Hebrew names, you do need to know the meaning of it because that is really helpful. But even like a Greek word or a Hebrew word, do you like when he brings up and defines them?

ALL RESPOND: Yes, absolutely. It’s educational.

Pastor John: Good, the reason I ask is because Tim used to always avoid using those kind of (words), because Tim studied Greek and Hebrew and he does disagree with me. He say’s he doesn’t like to use that because he feels people will think that he is

trying to show off. And yet most of the people have said that they do like when he uses these words.

Lisa: No, I think it helps for your better understanding. It really does. And it helps you to remember also.

Pastor John: That's why we have it on record. All four said, yes. So that is helpful, because it's something. Before we started this, he said he was shocked that people said that. Because he used to always avoid doing that. Uhh, and actually, as you mentioned you brought up the historical background. I think the thing that.....you know, you guys didn't put it this way but I was thinking this before with.....after the first group sat down and talked about what Tim does. Tim does describe the historical background which is very, very helpful. He also describes the emotional background. And the psychological, not just landscape but instinct of the person and that is what the full picture is. Some people get up and give you the historical background of the person and it is just so boring.

Lisa: Dry.

5. Pastor John: *But he paints all three of those things. It is not just the historical background but it is the emotional and psychological background too, which is very helpful. Okay, anything irritating or helpful, and again this is just a grab bag. And we have mentioned some that have been very helpful. Anything else?*

Lisa: What I said we already covered, I said that it was helpful when the cultural norms were provided or things that help you understand the true significance of whatever the act is. We already said that.

Michael: Yeah, I have brought up the complaint about the story the real life analogy or something. It isn't irritating it's just that they take up more time than part of the message. Especially, for the younger, and I am thinking of the youth group for example. They may remember the story more than they remember the message. And I think a little more time to be spent on the message itself. But, he does a wonderful job bringing me to it. It's just a matter of how much time.

Jessica: I really like the examples from everyday life and stories from home type of thing because it sort of, if we are drifting away it grabs you back again.

Pastor John: Not that that ever happens.

Jessica: No that never happens Pastor Tim.

Lisa: No, we are never wandering off!

Michael: You know what is really interesting here for me is Pastor Tim's passion and his energy. The level of energy that he has in the stories that he is telling and or the

points that he is making. I don't ever remember being bored because he has such high energy and such passion and you are just tuned in and waiting for the next point of where he is going. So, that is something that I just really appreciate, and not just the substance. Sometimes you will hear a message and the person will be a little, you know maybe, he doesn't show as much passion that needs to be. He does a wonderful job in elevating that. I love that. That's something that I really appreciate.

Lisa: Yeah, that passion really does grab your attention. Like I said that is what drew Sammy and I to this church. Even last night when I was listening to these tapes, you know it started out like, "Oh, I've got to listen to these tapes." You know, like it was a chore. And then, I would be listening to the tape and I would think, "Oh, this is good." And then Sam would walk in and ask, "What are you listening to the tapes?" And he would start listening to the tape and then before you know it, it would be like better than watching the T.V. Which is good, because at that hour of the night we are like, zoning.

Michael: It's not like, I always feel like.....He's never like, "It's Sunday so I have to give a message today" but (I) can always sense.....

Lisa: Yeah you look forward to it.

Michael: No, no like he himself, like he's as excited about telling you as we are at listening to him. And you can see that it's a gift, a passion that he has.

Lisa: It's contagious.

Michael: It is. That's a very good point. It's infectious; it's contagious.

Lisa: It makes you want to come. Church is not a chore.

Tina: It's hard to believe that he thought we wouldn't want to know the difference with the words in Greek and what they meant. Because I thought, if any thing, I've heard messages with too much focus on giving you the meaning. It could be the other way around where this is like actually informative.

Lisa: He just slips it in on the side like "by the way...."

Tina: Because I have heard many sermons where they really go on teaching you instead of preaching, which has a different place.

Michael: I agree with Pastor Tim that if it is not done correctly in that you can come across as if "let me tell you how well I can speak Greek."

Lisa: Well, that's like maybe in a Sunday School setting.

Michael: There is a difference in a Sunday School or Bible study setting. But if you are preaching, I agree with Pastor Tim, it can come off as.....I would like to hear

more of it Pastor John. But, I have been in an environment where it went on for minutes and minutes. "Okay, I got the point." How does it relate to me or where are we going with this?

Lisa: It has to be done at a point where it is relevant. I think that what Pastor Tim does is like when he was telling the story about all the children that Leah had had. Explaining to you what the child's name meant to help you to understand her state of mind and what she was feeling at the time. Look at how she was feeling.....she named her children, what she did. He's careful not to sound pompous about it. He does it to help you to understand better.

6. Pastor John: Good. Any other things before we go to the last question? So, onto the last question. Good. How would you rate it? As far as the series is concerned. Interest level and personal help. Or not very helpful.

Tina: I gave it an eight not because it wasn't a ten just because for me there were some things that I didn't understand. Very little things like Leah and Rachael that to me confused me. That could have been a little more explained. I didn't understand why Jacob would have had to sleep with her and all that stuff. Overall I thought it was very helpful. It helped to understand what God expects from us. It made me understand we need to react differently to every situation we're in. And these women were very good examples.

Jessica: I gave it a nine. I thought that it was extremely interesting and well done, but yet, none of the stories related directly to my life. But, the lessons in these stories I can apply to my life.

Lisa: I gave it a ten. I really liked it. I really liked it a lot because it exceeded what I had expected, because I have so much to learn too. It was helpful to me to learn what the women in the Bible have gone through because I don't have the background like a lot in the church do. So, I loved it.

Michael: I gave it nine or a ten only because again, my own understanding or my own comprehension.....But the level of passion as I go back to that. The focus of the message I was able to really get a lot from it. And Pastor Tim really has a lot of stick-to-it-ness to make the point and to repeat himself, to get us to understand the point. I was really able to benefit from the points. Whether it was women or not I felt having a sinful heart I had an appreciation for it the points that he was making.

Pastor John: Very good. Anything anyone else would like to add? Thank you very much for all of your time.

APPENDIX D

WOMEN'S SURVEY RESULTS SPREADSHEET

Table 1: When I listen to a sermon, primarily I want:												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		-	
1	help with problems in daily life	304	23.08%	48	24.12%	72	20.63%	60	20.20%	97	26.29%		
2	strong Bible teaching that helps me understand the Word	787	59.76%	118	59.30%	212	60.74%	186	62.63%	212	57.45%		
3	clear direction in what I should believe about my role as a woman	90	6.83%	10	5.03%	30	8.60%	18	6.06%	26	7.05%		
4	None of the above I want (write in answer)	136	10.33%	23	11.56%	35	10.03%	33	11.11%	34	9.21%		
Total		1317	100%	199	100%	349	100%	297	100%	369	100%		
	Mean	2.044		2.04		2.08		2.081		1.992			
	Standard Dev.	0.843		0.869		0.83		0.838		0.839			
	Mean Percentile	73.90%		73.99%		72.99%		72.98%		75.20%			
When I listen to a sermon, primarily I want:												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	help with problems in daily life	24	34.78%	37	23.87%	50		70	24.91%	27	18.88%	10	22.22%
2	strong Bible teaching that helps me understand the Word	34	49.28%	88	56.77%	130	61.61%	162	57.65%	90	62.94%	26	57.78%
3	clear direction in what I should believe about my role as a woman	6	8.70%	12	7.74%	15	7.11%	13	4.63%	8	5.59%	6	13.33%
4	None of the above I want (write in answer)	5	7.25%	18	11.61%	16	7.58%	36	12.81%	18	12.59%	3	6.67%
Total		69	100%	155	100%	211	100%	281	100%	143	100%	45	100%
	Mean	1.884		2.071		1.986		2.053		2.119		2.044	
	Standard Dev.	0.85		0.884		0.784		0.899		0.86		0.796	
	Mean Percentile	77.90%		73.23%		75.36%		73.67%		72.03%		73.89%	
When I listen to a sermon, primarily I want:												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	help with problems in daily life	8	34.78%	31	30.69%	97	25.39%	68	21.73%	23	17.97%	52	19.77%
2	strong Bible teaching that helps me understand the Word	11	47.83%	53	52.48%	227	59.42%	203	64.86%	83	64.84%	147	55.89%

3	clear direction in what I should believe about my role as a woman	3	13.04%	12	11.88%	28	7.33%	20	6.39%	6	4.69%	9	3.42%
4	None of the above I want (write in answer)	1	4.35%	5	4.95%	30	7.85%	22	7.03%	16	12.50%	55	20.91%
Total		23	100%	101	100%	382	100%	313	100%	128	100%	263	100%
Mean		1.87		1.911		1.976		1.987		2.117		2.255	
Standard Dev.		0.815		0.789		0.802		0.751		0.848		1.004	
Mean Percentile		78.26%		77.23%		75.59%		75.32%		72.07%		68.63%	

Table 2: When I read the Bible or hear It read in church the question I most often find myself asking is:												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		-	
1	what does it mean?	302	24.22%	45	22.96%	74	22.77%	69	24.73%	86	24.57%		
2	is this true?	27	2.17%	6	3.06%	7	2.15%	4	1.43%	7	2.00%		
3	how does this apply to my life?	822	65.92%	133	67.86%	222	68.31%	177	63.44%	235	67.14%		
4	none of the above; instead I think (write in answer)	96	7.70%	12	6.12%	22	6.77%	29	10.39%	22	6.29%		
Total		1247	100%	196	100%	325	100%	279	100%	350	100%		
	Mean	2.571		2.571		2.591		2.595		2.551			
	Standard Dev.	0.94		0.911		0.914		0.973		0.931			
	Mean Percentile	60.73%		60.71%		60.23%		60.13%		61.21%			
When I read the Bible or hear It read in church the question I most often find myself asking is:												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	what does it mean?	12	18.46%	43	28.86%	40	20.73%	66	25.00%	29	21.64%	14	30.43%
2	is this true?	3	4.62%	4	2.68%	5	2.59%	5	1.89%	1	0.75%	0	0.00%
3	how does this apply to my life?	44	67.69%	95	63.76%	135	69.95%	168	63.64%	96	71.64%	30	65.22%
4	none of the above; instead I think (write in answer)	6	9.23%	7	4.70%	13	6.74%	25	9.47%	8	5.97%	2	4.35%
Total		65	100%	149	100%	193	100%	264	100%	134	100%	46	100%
	Mean	2.677		2.443		2.627		2.576		2.619		2.435	
	Standard Dev.	0.886		0.961		0.887		0.968		0.891		0.981	
	Mean Percentile	58.08%		63.93%		59.33%		60.61%		59.51%		64.13%	
When I read the Bible or hear It read in church the question I most often find myself asking is:												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	what does it mean?	2	9.52%	22	23.66%	75	21.68%	82	26.62%	29	24.37%	71	27.63%
2	is this true?	0	0.00%	1	1.08%	6	1.73%	12	3.90%	0	0.00%	6	2.33%
3	how does this apply to my life?	16	76.19%	68	73.12%	242	69.94%	195	63.31%	76	63.87%	151	58.75%
4	none of the above; instead I think (write in answer)	3	14.29%	2	2.15%	23	6.65%	19	6.17%	14	11.76%	29	11.28%
Total		21	100%	93	100%	346	100%	308	100%	119	100%	257	100%
	Mean	2.952		2.538		2.616		2.49		2.63		2.537	

	Standard Dev.	0.74	0.879	0.897	0.953	0.982	1.015
	Mean Percentile	51.19%	61.56%	59.61%	62.74%	59.24%	61.58%

Table 3: When faced with a stressful situation:												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		-	
1	I try to modify the situation that is causing the stress. I seek to make changes in my environment	368	31.86%	63	34.24%	92	29.97%	78	30.00%	119	36.17%		
2	I try to mange the negative feelings that the situation brings, at times even denying that they exist	165	14.29%	28	15.22%	47	15.31%	30	11.54%	47	14.29%		
3	I look at the situation from a different perspective that lets me change the meaning of the situation	288	24.94%	47	25.54%	70	22.80%	72	27.69%	84	25.53%		
4	none of the above, instead I (write in answer)	334	28.92%	46	25.00%	98	31.92%	80	30.77%	79	24.01%		
Total		1155	100%	184	100%	307	100%	260	100%	329	100%		
	Mean	2.509		2.413		2.567		2.592		2.374			
	Standard Dev.	1.211		1.198		1.22		1.209		1.201			
	Mean Percentile	62.27%		64.67%		60.83%		60.19%		65.65%			
When faced with a stressful situation:												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	I try to modify the situation that is causing the stress. I seek to make changes in my environment	20	34.48%	42	30.43%	75	40.54%	64	26.12%	34	26.98%	11	28.21%
2	I try to mange the negative feelings that the situation brings, at times even denying that they exist	9	15.52%	33	23.91%	26	14.05%	24	9.80%	19	15.08%	4	10.26%
3	I look at the situation from a different perspective that lets me change the meaning of the situation	9	15.52%	40	28.99%	40	21.62%	70	28.57%	28	22.22%	10	25.64%
4	none of the above, instead I (write in answer)	20	34.48%	23	16.67%	44	23.78%	87	35.51%	45	35.71%	14	35.90%
Total		58	100%	138	100%	185	100%	245	100%	126	100%	39	100%
	Mean	2.5		2.319		2.286		2.735		2.667		2.692	
	Standard Dev.	1.288		1.081		1.224		1.197		1.22		1.239	
	Mean Percentile	62.50%		67.03%		67.84%		56.63%		58.33%		57.69%	

When faced with a stressful situation:											by education		
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	I try to modify the situation that is causing the stress. I seek to make changes in my environment	4	20.00%	35	42.17%	98	29.79%	91	32.62%	28	25.45%	85	34.98%
2	I try to mange the negative feelings that the situation brings, at times even denying that they exist	3	15.00%	13	15.66%	52	15.81%	39	13.98%	11	10.00%	23	9.47%
3	I look at the situation from a different perspective that lets me change the meaning of the situation	6	30.00%	15	18.07%	77	23.40%	65	23.30%	35	31.82%	68	27.98%
4	none of the above, instead I (write in answer)	7	35.00%	20	24.10%	102	31.00%	84	30.11%	36	32.73%	67	27.57%
Total		20	100%	83	100%	329	100%	279	100%	110	100%	243	100%
	Mean	2.8		2.241		2.556		2.509		2.718		2.481	
	Standard Dev.	1.152		1.236		1.211		1.229		1.174		1.228	
	Mean Percentile	55.00%		68.98%		61.09%		62.28%		57.05%		62.96%	

Table 4: I feel most depressed when:											by income		
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		-	
1	conflicts arise or disruption occurs in a close personal relationship	653	56.83%	91	50.84%	181	58.96%	142	55.04%	193	59.20%		
2	I cannot reach a goal I have set for myself or I perform poorly in a task	255	22.19%	48	26.82%	60	19.54%	62	24.03%	71	21.78%		
3	neither of the above, I feel most depressed when (write in answer)	241	20.97%	40	22.35%	66	21.50%	54	20.93%	62	19.02%		
Total		1149	100%	179	100%	307	100%	258	100%	326	100%		
	Mean	1.641		1.715		1.625		1.659		1.598			
	Standard Dev.	0.806		0.809		0.816		0.804		0.789			
	Mean Percentile	78.62%		76.16%		79.15%		78.04%		80.06%			

I feel most depressed when:												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	conflicts arise or disruption occurs in a close personal relationship	36	58.06%	80	59.26%	107	56.32%	131	54.58%	68	53.97%	29	72.50%
2	I cannot reach a goal I have set for myself or I perform poorly in a task	13	20.97%	35	25.93%	44	23.16%	43	17.92%	24	19.05%	6	15.00%
3	neither of the above, I feel most depressed when (write in answer)	13	20.97%	20	14.81%	39	20.53%	66	27.50%	34	26.98%	5	12.50%
Total		62	100%	135	100%	190	100%	240	100%	126	100%	40	100%
	Mean	1.629		1.556		1.642		1.729		1.73		1.4	
	Standard Dev.	0.814		0.74		0.802		0.866		0.862		0.709	
	Mean Percentile	79.03%		81.48%		78.60%		75.69%		75.66%		86.67%	
I feel most depressed when:												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	conflicts arise or disruption occurs in a close personal relationship	15	65.22%	54	67.50%	172	52.76%	160	58.18%	67	58.77%	125	52.52%
2	I cannot reach a goal I have set for myself or I perform poorly in a task	4	17.39%	14	17.50%	83	25.46%	57	20.73%	25	21.93%	50	21.01%
3	neither of the above, I feel most depressed when (write in answer)	4	17.39%	12	15.00%	71	21.78%	58	21.09%	22	19.30%	63	26.47%
Total		23	100%	80	100%	326	100%	275	100%	114	100%	238	100%
	Mean	1.522		1.475		1.69		1.629		1.605		1.739	
	Standard Dev.	0.79		0.746		0.807		0.811		0.794		0.852	
	Mean Percentile	82.61%		84.17%		76.99%		79.03%		79.82%		75.35%	

Table 5: To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements?:													
Men are cognitive (thinking) while woman are emotional												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		-	
1	strongly agree	159	14.40%	18	10.78%	43	14.68%	41	16.21%	49	15.51%		
2	agree	502	45.47%	86	51.50%	139	47.44%	114	45.06%	132	41.77%		
3	not sure	74	6.70%	13	7.78%	22	7.51%	13	5.14%	18	5.70%		
4	disagree	277	25.09%	36	21.56%	62	21.16%	61	24.11%	95	30.06%		
5	strongly disagree	92	8.33%	14	8.38%	27	9.22%	24	9.49%	22	6.96%		
Total		1104	100%	167	100%	293	100%	253	100%	316	100%		
	Mean	2.675		2.653		2.628		2.656		2.712			
	Standard Dev.	1.229		1.177		1.228		1.268		1.241			
	Mean Percentile	66.50%		66.95%		67.44%		66.88%		65.76%			
Men are cognitive (thinking) while woman are emotional												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	strongly agree	7	12.07%	13	10.40%	30	16.76%	32	13.56%	18	14.52%	4	10.53%
2	agree	22	37.93%	62	49.60%	89	49.72%	100	42.37%	57	45.97%	16	42.11%
3	not sure	12	20.69%	14	11.20%	5	2.79%	13	5.51%	6	4.84%	0	0.00%
4	disagree	12	20.69%	25	20.00%	39	21.79%	64	27.12%	32	25.81%	15	39.47%
5	strongly disagree	5	8.62%	11	8.80%	16	8.94%	27	11.44%	11	8.87%	3	7.89%
Total		58	100%	125	100%	179	100%	236	100%	124	100%	38	100%
	Mean	2.759		2.672		2.564		2.805		2.685		2.921	
	Standard Dev.	1.174		1.169		1.25		1.29		1.252		1.26	
	Mean Percentile	64.83%		66.56%		68.72%		63.90%		66.29%		61.58%	
Men are cognitive (thinking) while woman are emotional												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	strongly agree	2	9.52%	16	20.25%	56	17.89%	40	15.21%	10	9.43%	15	6.49%
2	agree	7	33.33%	44	55.70%	168	53.67%	123	46.77%	44	41.51%	81	35.06%
3	not sure	6	28.57%	5	6.33%	23	7.35%	13	4.94%	6	5.66%	11	4.76%
4	disagree	5	23.81%	11	13.92%	51	16.29%	72	27.38%	32	30.19%	85	36.80%
5	strongly disagree	1	4.76%	3	3.80%	15	4.79%	15	5.70%	14	13.21%	39	16.88%
Total		21	100%	79	100%	313	100%	263	100%	106	100%	231	100%
	Mean	2.81		2.253		2.364		2.616		2.962		3.225	
	Standard Dev.	1.078		1.056		1.098		1.198		1.279		1.269	
	Mean Percentile	63.81%		74.94%		72.72%		67.68%		60.75%		55.50%	

Table 6: Men are active while woman are passive												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		-	
1	strongly agree	21	1.90%	5	2.99%	6	2.05%	4	1.57%	3	0.95%		
2	agree	62	5.62%	7	4.19%	21	7.17%	13	5.12%	18	5.71%		
3	not sure	81	7.34%	13	7.78%	26	8.87%	19	7.48%	18	5.71%		
4	disagree	566	51.27%	95	56.89%	149	50.85%	125	49.21%	157	49.84%		
5	strongly disagree	374	33.88%	47	28.14%	91	31.06%	93	36.61%	119	37.78%		
Total		1104	100%	167	100%	293	100%	254	100%	315	100%		
	Mean	4.096		4.03		4.017		4.142		4.178			

	Standard Dev.	0.894		0.895		0.934		0.878		0.848			
	Mean Percentile	38.08%		39.40%		39.66%		37.17%		36.44%			
Men are active while woman are passive												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	strongly agree	0	0.00%	3	2.38%	4	2.23%	1	0.42%	2	1.63%	0	0.00%
2	agree	6	10.53%	5	3.97%	12	6.70%	14	5.93%	6	4.88%	2	5.41%
3	not sure	11	19.30%	14	11.11%	12	6.70%	11	4.66%	8	6.50%	5	13.51%
4	disagree	21	36.84%	75	59.52%	82	45.81%	120	50.85%	69	56.10%	23	62.16%
5	strongly disagree	19	33.33%	29	23.02%	69	38.55%	90	38.14%	38	30.89%	7	18.92%
Total		57	100%	126	100%	179	100%	236	100%	123	100%	37	100%
	Mean	3.93		3.968		4.117		4.203		4.098		3.946	
	Standard Dev.	0.979		0.848		0.956		0.815		0.844		0.743	
	Mean Percentile	41.40%		40.63%		37.65%		35.93%		38.05%		41.08%	
Men are active while woman are passive												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	strongly agree	0	0.00%	2	2.53%	6	1.91%	4	1.53%	1	0.93%	3	1.30%
2	agree	2	9.52%	10	12.66%	14	4.46%	13	4.96%	5	4.67%	8	3.48%
3	not sure	5	23.81%	16	20.25%	28	8.92%	14	5.34%	4	3.74%	7	3.04%
4	disagree	7	33.33%	33	41.77%	184	58.60%	145	55.34%	51	47.66%	98	42.61%
5	strongly disagree	7	33.33%	18	22.78%	82	26.11%	86	32.82%	46	42.99%	114	49.57%
Total		21	100%	79	100%	314	100%	262	100%	107	100%	230	100%
	Mean	3.905		3.696		4.025		4.13		4.271		4.357	
	Standard Dev.	0.995		1.042		0.838		0.839		0.819		0.811	
	Mean Percentile	41.90%		46.08%		39.49%		37.40%		34.58%		32.87%	

Table 7: There are few differences between men and women aside from physical bodies												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		_	
1	strongly agree	68	6.20%	9	5.39%	17	5.82%	19	7.51%	17	5.45%		
2	agree	106	9.66%	19	11.38%	29	9.93%	24	9.49%	31	9.94%		
3	not sure	35	3.19%	5	2.99%	7	2.40%	9	3.56%	8	2.56%		
4	disagree	502	45.76%	82	49.10%	139	47.60%	112	44.27%	134	42.95%		
5	strongly disagree	386	35.19%	52	31.14%	100	34.25%	89	35.18%	122	39.10%		
Total		1097	100%	167	100%	292	100%	253	100%	312	100%		
	Mean	3.941		3.892		3.945		3.901		4.003			
	Standard Dev.	1.151		1.13		1.135		1.199		1.144			
	Mean Percentile	41.19%		42.16%		41.10%		41.98%		39.94%			
There are few differences between men and women aside from physical bodies												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	strongly agree	3	5.26%	8	6.35%	12	6.74%	19	8.05%	5	4.13%	3	7.89%
2	agree	7	12.28%	9	7.14%	18	10.11%	20	8.47%	15	12.40%	7	18.42%
3	not sure	3	5.26%	5	3.97%	4	2.25%	12	5.08%	1	0.83%	4	10.53%
4	disagree	32	56.14%	60	47.62%	78	43.82%	96	40.68%	59	48.76%	19	50.00%
5	strongly	12	21.05%	44	34.92%	66	37.08%	89	37.71%	41	33.88%	5	13.16%

	disagree												
	Total	57	100%	126	100%	178	100%	236	100%	121	100%	38	100%
	Mean	3.754		3.976		3.944		3.915		3.959		3.421	
	Standard Dev.	1.09		1.12		1.187		1.221		1.106		1.177	
	Mean Percentile	44.91%		40.48%		41.12%		41.69%		40.83%		51.58%	
There are few differences between men and women aside from physical bodies												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	strongly agree	1	4.76%	6	7.59%	20	6.41%	13	5.00%	5	4.76%	10	4.33%
2	agree	1	4.76%	13	16.46%	21	6.73%	24	9.23%	13	12.38%	26	11.26%
3	not sure	3	14.29%	4	5.06%	10	3.21%	2	0.77%	2	1.90%	11	4.76%
4	disagree	11	52.38%	31	39.24%	141	45.19%	118	45.38%	42	40.00%	125	54.11%
5	strongly disagree	5	23.81%	25	31.65%	120	38.46%	103	39.62%	43	40.95%	59	25.54%
	Total	21	100%	79	100%	312	100%	260	100%	105	100%	231	100%
	Mean	3.857		3.709		4.026		4.054		4		3.853	
	Standard Dev.	1.014		1.283		1.125		1.107		1.168		1.061	
	Mean Percentile	42.86%		45.82%		39.49%		38.92%		40.00%		42.94%	

Table 8: There are more differences between men and women than there are similarities												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		-	
1	strongly agree	90	8.31%	13	7.83%	30	10.53%	18	7.17%	25	8.06%		
2	agree	383	35.36%	59	35.54%	95	33.33%	95	37.85%	107	34.52%		
3	not sure	222	20.50%	38	22.89%	61	21.40%	43	17.13%	66	21.29%		
4	disagree	345	31.86%	48	28.92%	90	31.58%	86	34.26%	100	32.26%		
5	strongly disagree	43	3.97%	8	4.82%	9	3.16%	9	3.59%	12	3.87%		
Total		1083	100%	166	100%	285	100%	251	100%	310	100%		
	Mean	2.878		2.873		2.835		2.892		2.894			
	Standard Dev.	1.072		1.068		1.083		1.07		1.067			
	Mean Percentile	62.44%		62.53%		63.30%		62.15%		62.13%			
There are more differences between men and women than there are similarities												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	strongly agree	5	8.93%	4	3.23%	16	9.09%	22	9.52%	7	5.79%	5	13.51%
2	agree	18	32.14%	48	38.71%	60	34.09%	81	35.06%	43	35.54%	13	35.14%
3	not sure	18	32.14%	29	23.39%	37	21.02%	48	20.78%	23	19.01%	10	27.03%
4	disagree	14	25.00%	36	29.03%	58	32.95%	68	29.44%	41	33.88%	7	18.92%
5	strongly disagree	1	1.79%	7	5.65%	5	2.84%	12	5.19%	7	5.79%	2	5.41%
Total		56	100%	124	100%	176	100%	231	100%	121	100%	37	100%
	Mean	2.786		2.952		2.864		2.857		2.983		2.676	
	Standard Dev.	0.986		1.019		1.066		1.104		1.08		1.107	
	Mean Percentile	64.29%		60.97%		62.73%		62.86%		60.33%		66.49%	

There are more differences between men and women than there are similarities												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	strongly agree	0	0.00%	10	12.99%	30	9.71%	19	7.36%	9	8.49%	8	3.56%
2	agree	4	20.00%	40	51.95%	127	41.10%	90	34.88%	32	30.19%	49	21.78%
3	not sure	10	50.00%	18	23.38%	63	20.39%	55	21.32%	22	20.75%	43	19.11%
4	disagree	4	20.00%	7	9.09%	81	26.21%	88	34.11%	38	35.85%	108	48.00%
5	strongly disagree	2	10.00%	2	2.60%	8	2.59%	6	2.33%	5	4.72%	17	7.56%
Total		20	100%	77	100%	309	100%	258	100%	106	100%	225	100%
Mean		3.2		2.364		2.709		2.891		2.981		3.342	
Standard Dev.		0.894		0.916		1.041		1.034		1.095		1.015	
Mean Percentile		56.00%		72.73%		65.83%		62.17%		60.38%		53.16%	

Table 9: The title of a popular book from the 1990's was <i>Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus</i> . What do you think about this statement?												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k			
1	strongly agree	104	9.63%	15	9.20%	20	6.97%	29	11.69%	36	11.54%		
2	agree	461	42.69%	67	41.10%	125	43.55%	105	42.34%	140	44.87%		
3	not sure	347	32.13%	57	34.97%	96	33.45%	72	29.03%	93	29.81%		
4	disagree	118	10.93%	17	10.43%	36	12.54%	24	9.68%	32	10.26%		
5	strongly disagree	50	4.63%	7	4.29%	10	3.48%	18	7.26%	11	3.53%		
Total		1080	100%	163	100%	287	100%	248	100%	312	100%		
	Mean	2.582		2.595		2.62		2.585		2.494			
	Standard Dev.	0.966		0.947		0.915		1.054		0.949			
	Mean Percentile	68.35%		68.10%		67.60%		68.31%		70.13%			
The title of a popular book from the 1990's was <i>Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus</i> . What do you think about this statement?												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	strongly agree	9	16.07%	11	8.80%	15	8.47%	26	11.35%	11	9.09%	1	2.70%
2	agree	20	35.71%	50	40.00%	81	45.76%	101	44.10%	51	42.15%	8	21.62%
3	not sure	17	30.36%	43	34.40%	52	29.38%	66	28.82%	41	33.88%	22	59.46%
4	disagree	7	12.50%	14	11.20%	20	11.30%	24	10.48%	12	9.92%	6	16.22%
5	strongly disagree	3	5.36%	7	5.60%	9	5.08%	12	5.24%	6	4.96%	0	0.00%
Total		56	100%	125	100%	177	100%	229	100%	121	100%	37	100%
	Mean	2.554		2.648		2.588		2.541		2.595		2.892	
	Standard Dev.	1.077		0.986		0.974		1.002		0.962		0.699	
	Mean Percentile	68.93%		67.04%		68.25%		69.17%		68.10%		62.16%	
The title of a popular book from the 1990's was <i>Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus</i> . What do you think about this statement?												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	strongly agree	1	4.76%	8	10.13%	28	9.09%	24	9.30%	11	10.78%	16	7.14%
2	agree	6	28.57%	32	40.51%	141	45.78%	114	44.19%	40	39.22%	91	40.62%
3	not sure	8	38.10%	24	30.38%	103	33.44%	84	32.56%	30	29.41%	70	31.25%
4	disagree	4	19.05%	13	16.46%	26	8.44%	29	11.24%	13	12.75%	29	12.95%
5	strongly disagree	2	9.52%	2	2.53%	10	3.25%	7	2.71%	8	7.84%	18	8.04%
Total		21	100%	79	100%	308	100%	258	100%	102	100%	224	100%
	Mean	3		2.608		2.51		2.539		2.676		2.741	

	Standard Dev.	1.049	0.966	0.893	0.908	1.082	1.04
	Mean Percentile	60.00%	67.85%	69.81%	69.22%	66.47%	65.18%

Table 10: Most male preachers that I have listened to DO NOT understand the life seasons, cycles and situations of the women in their audience												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k			
1	strongly agree	135	12.33%	14	8.43%	33	11.34%	35	13.94%	41	13.02%		
2	agree	369	33.70%	49	29.52%	91	31.27%	85	33.86%	119	37.78%		
3	not sure	250	22.83%	37	22.29%	79	27.15%	49	19.52%	71	22.54%		
4	disagree	307	28.04%	60	36.14%	79	27.15%	75	29.88%	73	23.17%		
5	strongly disagree	34	3.11%	6	3.61%	9	3.09%	7	2.79%	11	3.49%		
Total		1095	100%	166	100%	291	100%	251	100%	315	100%		
	Mean	2.759		2.97		2.794		2.737		2.663			
	Standard Dev.	1.085		1.07		1.06		1.115		1.077			
	Mean Percentile	64.82%		60.60%		64.12%		65.26%		66.73%			
Most male preachers that I have listened to DO NOT understand the life seasons, cycles and situations of the women in their audience												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	strongly agree	7	12.28%	12	9.52%	19	10.61%	41	17.52%	11	9.02%	6	16.22%
2	agree	17	29.82%	30	23.81%	59	32.96%	84	35.90%	47	38.52%	11	29.73%
3	not sure	11	19.30%	36	28.57%	35	19.55%	47	20.09%	31	25.41%	9	24.32%
4	disagree	18	31.58%	42	33.33%	60	33.52%	59	25.21%	32	26.23%	11	29.73%
5	strongly disagree	4	7.02%	6	4.76%	6	3.35%	3	1.28%	1	0.82%	0	0.00%
Total		57	100%	126	100%	179	100%	234	100%	122	100%	37	100%
	Mean	2.912		3		2.86		2.568		2.713		2.676	
	Standard Dev.	1.184		1.073		1.1		1.087		0.983		1.082	
	Mean Percentile	61.75%		60.00%		62.79%		68.63%		65.74%		66.49%	
Most male preachers that I have listened to DO NOT understand the life seasons, cycles and situations of the women in their audience												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	strongly agree	1	4.76%	9	11.54%	28	8.97%	30	11.54%	24	22.43%	36	15.79%
2	agree	5	23.81%	28	35.90%	111	35.58%	77	29.62%	35	32.71%	80	35.09%
3	not sure	6	28.57%	24	30.77%	64	20.51%	59	22.69%	25	23.36%	48	21.05%
4	disagree	6	28.57%	16	20.51%	101	32.37%	86	33.08%	20	18.69%	54	23.68%
5	strongly disagree	3	14.29%	1	1.28%	8	2.56%	8	3.08%	3	2.80%	10	4.39%
Total		21	100%	78	100%	312	100%	260	100%	107	100%	228	100%
	Mean	3.238		2.641		2.84		2.865		2.467		2.658	
	Standard Dev.	1.136		0.98		1.058		1.095		1.119		1.133	
	Mean Percentile	55.24%		67.18%		63.21%		62.69%		70.65%		66.84%	

Table 11: When playing games, girls are more tolerant toward the game's rules than are boys and are more willing to make exceptions to the rules when needed												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k			
1	strongly agree	66	6.02%	10	6.02%	15	5.14%	14	5.58%	21	6.67%		

	Standard Dev.	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Mean Percentile	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Following the rules is very important							by education
#	Answer	Some HS	HS grad	Some College	College Grad	Some grad	Graduate degree
1	True	14 100%	59 100%	226 100%	184 100%	77 100%	141 100%
	Total	14 100%	59 100%	226 100%	184 100%	77 100%	141 100%
	Mean	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Standard Dev.	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Mean Percentile	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Table 13: My self image is closely tied to my ability to care for others										by income
#	Answer	Base	income < 30k	income 30-50k	income 50-75k	over 75k				-
1	True	490 100%	82 100%	130 100%	110 100%	142 100%				
	Total	490 100%	82 100%	130 100%	110 100%	142 100%				
	Mean	1	1	1	1	1				
	Standard Dev.	0	0	0	0	0				
	Mean Percentile	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%				
My self image is closely tied to my ability to care for others										by age
#	Answer	Age 13-18	Age 19-26	Age 27-35	Age 46-54	Age 55-64	Age 65 or older			
1	True	19 100%	67 100%	78 100%	89 100%	58 100%	25 100%			
	Total	19 100%	67 100%	78 100%	89 100%	58 100%	25 100%			
	Mean	1	1	1	1	1	1			
	Standard Dev.	0	0	0	0	0	0			
	Mean Percentile	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%			
My self image is closely tied to my ability to care for others										by education
#	Answer	Some HS	HS grad	Some College	College Grad	Some grad	Graduate degree			
1	True	9 100%	38 100%	146 100%	118 100%	42 100%	94 100%			
	Total	9 100%	38 100%	146 100%	118 100%	42 100%	94 100%			
	Mean	1	1	1	1	1	1			
	Standard Dev.	0	0	0	0	0	0			
	Mean Percentile	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%			

Table 14: I make decisions based primarily on what is right and fair and not how it will affect relationships.										by income
#	Answer	Base	income < 30k	income 30-50k	income 50-75k	over 75k				-
1	True	641 100%	96 100%	174 100%	155 100%	176 100%				
	Total	641 100%	96 100%	174 100%	155 100%	176 100%				
	Mean	1	1	1	1	1				
	Standard Dev.	0	0	0	0	0				
	Mean Percentile	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%				
I make decisions based primarily on what is right and fair and not how it will affect relationships.										by age
#	Answer	Age 13-18	Age 19-26	Age 27-35	Age 46-54	Age 55-64	Age 65 or older			
1	True	34 100%	70 100%	101 100%	142 100%	73 100%	15 100%			
	Total	34 100%	70 100%	101 100%	142 100%	73 100%	15 100%			
	Mean	1	1	1	1	1	1			
	Standard Dev.	0	0	0	0	0	0			
	Mean Percentile	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%			
I make decisions based primarily on what is right and fair and not how it will affect relationships.										by education
#	Answer	Some HS	HS grad	Some College	College Grad	Some grad	Graduate degree			

1	True	9	100%	52	100%	195	100%	158	100%	63	100%	120	100%
	Total	9	100%	52	100%	195	100%	158	100%	63	100%	120	100%
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1		1	
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0		0	
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%	

Table 15: I make decisions primarily on how it will affect relations and not necessarily by what is right and fair												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		-	
1	True	192	100%	39	100%	44	100%	39	100%	61	100%		
Total		192	100%	39	100%	44	100%	39	100%	61	100%		
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1			
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0			
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%			
I make decisions primarily on how it will affect relations and not necessarily by what is right and fair												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	True	11	100%	27	100%	29	100%	35	100%	16	100%	5	100%
Total		11	100%	27	100%	29	100%	35	100%	16	100%	5	100%
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1		1	
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0		0	
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%	
I make decisions primarily on how it will affect relations and not necessarily by what is right and fair												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	True	8	100%	15	100%	50	100%	42	100%	14	100%	48	100%
Total		8	100%	15	100%	50	100%	42	100%	14	100%	48	100%
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1		1	
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0		0	
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%	

Table 16: My self image is organized around my ability to make and maintain relationships											by income		
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		-	
1	True	344	100%	65	100%	88	100%	75	100%	103	100%		
Total		344	100%	65	100%	88	100%	75	100%	103	100%		
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1			
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0			
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%			
My self image is organized around my ability to make and maintain relationships											by age		
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	True	22	100%	62	100%	59	100%	58	100%	23	100%	12	100%
Total		22	100%	62	100%	59	100%	58	100%	23	100%	12	100%
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1		1	
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0		0	
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%	
My self image is organized around my ability to make and maintain relationships											by education		
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	True	8	100%	28	100%	100	100%	84	100%	29	100%	67	100%
Total		8	100%	28	100%	100	100%	84	100%	29	100%	67	100%
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1		1	

	Standard Dev.	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Mean Percentile	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Table 17: I experience conflict when I must compete.											by income
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k	-
1	True	317	100%	59	100%	84	100%	68	100%	87	100%
	Total	317	100%	59	100%	84	100%	68	100%	87	100%
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1	
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0	
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%	
I experience conflict when I must compete.											by age
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64	Age 65 or older
1	True	16	100%	45	100%	46	100%	73	100%	29	100%
	Total	16	100%	45	100%	46	100%	73	100%	29	100%
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1	
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0	
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%	
I experience conflict when I must compete.											by education
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad	Graduate degree
1	True	7	100%	27	100%	86	100%	68	100%	42	100%
	Total	7	100%	27	100%	86	100%	68	100%	42	100%
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1	
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0	
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%	

Table 18: I place a higher value on being connected to those around me than on personal achievement.											by income
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k	-
1	True	c	100%	111	100%	172	100%	145	100%	183	100%
	Total	652	100%	111	100%	172	100%	145	100%	183	100%
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1	
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0	
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%	
I place a higher value on being connected to those around me than on personal achievement.											by age
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64	Age 65 or older
1	True	34	100%	62	100%	92	100%	144	100%	81	100%
	Total	34	100%	62	100%	92	100%	144	100%	81	100%
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1	
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0	
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%	
I place a higher value on being connected to those around me than on personal achievement.											by education
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad	Graduate degree
1	True	12	100%	49	100%	206	100%	169	100%	51	100%
	Total	12	100%	49	100%	206	100%	169	100%	51	100%
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1	

	Standard Dev.	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Mean Percentile	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Table 19: I like listening to sermons and learning about God’s judgment.												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		-	
1	True	513	100%	86	100%	132	100%	130	100%	126	100%		
Total		513	100%	86	100%	132	100%	130	100%	126	100%		
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1			
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0			
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%			
I like listening to sermons and learning about God’s judgment.												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	True	31	100%	55	100%	78	100%	110	100%	49	100%	19	100%
Total		31	100%	55	100%	78	100%	110	100%	49	100%	19	100%
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1		1	
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0		0	
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%	
I like listening to sermons and learning about God’s judgment.												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	True	10	100%	43	100%	174	100%	128	100%	35	100%	81	100%
Total		10	100%	43	100%	174	100%	128	100%	35	100%	81	100%
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1		1	
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0		0	
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%	

Table 20: I like listening to sermons and learning about God's love.												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		-	
1	True	960	100%	153	100%	251	100%	225	100%	271	100%		
Total		960	100%	153	100%	251	100%	225	100%	271	100%		
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1			
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0			
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%			
I like listening to sermons and learning about God's love.												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	True	55	100%	114	100%	156	100%	196	100%	110	100%	30	100%
Total		55	100%	114	100%	156	100%	196	100%	110	100%	30	100%
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1		1	
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0		0	
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%	
I like listening to sermons and learning about God's love.												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	True	18	100%	69	100%	292	100%	233	100%	82	100%	198	100%
Total		18	100%	69	100%	292	100%	233	100%	82	100%	198	100%
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1		1	
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0		0	

	Mean Percentile	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
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Table 21: I like listening to sermons and learning about God's mercy.												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		-	
1	True	945	100%	146	100%	241	100%	225	100%	273	100%		
Total		945	100%	146	100%	241	100%	225	100%	273	100%		
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1			
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0			
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%			
I like listening to sermons and learning about God's mercy.												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	True	50	100%	108	100%	152	100%	198	100%	109	100%	33	100%
Total		50	100%	108	100%	152	100%	198	100%	109	100%	33	100%
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1		1	
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0		0	
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%	
I like listening to sermons and learning about God's mercy.												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	True	15	100%	72	100%	286	100%	225	100%	91	100%	194	100%
Total		15	100%	72	100%	286	100%	225	100%	91	100%	194	100%
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1		1	
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0		0	
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%	

Table 22: I like listening to sermons and learning about God's justice.												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		-	
1	True	784	100%	127	100%	218	100%	185	100%	201	100%		
Total		784	100%	127	100%	218	100%	185	100%	201	100%		
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1			
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0			
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%			
I like listening to sermons and learning about God's justice.												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	True	44	100%	87	100%	131	100%	164	100%	90	100%	27	100%
Total		44	100%	87	100%	131	100%	164	100%	90	100%	27	100%
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1		1	
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0		0	
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%	
I like listening to sermons and learning about God's justice.												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	True	12	100%	52	100%	248	100%	185	100%	75	100%	167	100%
Total		12	100%	52	100%	248	100%	185	100%	75	100%	167	100%
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1		1	
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0		0	

	Mean Percentile	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
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Table 23: I like listening to sermons and learning about God's character.												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		-	
1	True	978	100%	148	100%	260	100%	235	100%	278	100%		
Total		978	100%	148	100%	260	100%	235	100%	278	100%		
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1			
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0			
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%			
I like listening to sermons and learning about God's character.												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	True	50	100%	117	100%	161	100%	209	100%	112	100%	25	100%
Total		50	100%	117	100%	161	100%	209	100%	112	100%	25	100%
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1		1	
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0		0	
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%	
I like listening to sermons and learning about God's character.												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	True	16	100%	67	100%	294	100%	241	100%	103	100%	200	100%
Total		16	100%	67	100%	294	100%	241	100%	103	100%	200	100%
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1		1	
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0		0	
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%	

Table 24: I like listening to sermons and learning about God's power.												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k			
1	True	896	100%	140	100%	237	100%	216	100%	246	100%		
Total		896	100%	140	100%	237	100%	216	100%	246	100%		
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1			
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0			
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%			
I like listening to sermons and learning about God's power.												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	True	44	100%	102	100%	146	100%	191	100%	103	100%	30	100%
Total		44	100%	102	100%	146	100%	191	100%	103	100%	30	100%
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1		1	
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0		0	
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%	
I like listening to sermons and learning about God's power.												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	True	10	100%	67	100%	278	100%	222	100%	87	100%	173	100%
Total		10	100%	67	100%	278	100%	222	100%	87	100%	173	100%
	Mean	1		1		1		1		1		1	
	Standard Dev.	0		0		0		0		0		0	
	Mean Percentile	100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%		100.00%	

Table 25: True or False											
I have little sense of control over my life.											by income
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k	-
1	True	212	19.68%	44	26.35%	54	18.75%	44	17.81%	60	19.42%

2	False	865	80.32%	123	73.65%	234	81.25%	203	82.19%	249	80.58%		
Total		1077	100%	167	100%	288	100%	247	100%	309	100%		
	Mean	1.803		1.737		1.812		1.822		1.806			
	Standard Dev.	0.398		0.442		0.391		0.383		0.396			
	Mean Percentile	59.84%		63.17%		59.38%		58.91%		59.71%			
I have little sense of control over my life.												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	True	8	14.29%	19	15.08%	37	20.79%	53	23.45%	18	15.25%	2	5.41%
2	False	48	85.71%	107	84.92%	141	79.21%	173	76.55%	100	84.75%	35	94.59%
Total		56	100%	126	100%	178	100%	226	100%	118	100%	37	100%
	Mean	1.857		1.849		1.792		1.765		1.847		1.946	
	Standard Dev.	0.353		0.359		0.407		0.425		0.361		0.229	
	Mean Percentile	57.14%		57.54%		60.39%		61.73%		57.63%		52.70%	
I have little sense of control over my life.												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	True	6	28.57%	16	20.78%	64	20.65%	55	21.40%	21	20.19%	24	10.62%
2	False	15	71.43%	61	79.22%	246	79.35%	202	78.60%	83	79.81%	202	89.38%
Total		21	100%	77	100%	310	100%	257	100%	104	100%	226	100%
	Mean	1.714		1.792		1.794		1.786		1.798		1.894	
	Standard Dev.	0.463		0.408		0.405		0.411		0.403		0.309	
	Mean Percentile	64.29%		60.39%		60.32%		60.70%		60.10%		55.31%	

Table 26: I have a low sense of my worth and abilities.												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k			
1	True	207	19.04%	50	29.76%	53	18.34%	40	15.87%	49	15.86%		
2	False	880	80.96%	118	70.24%	236	81.66%	212	84.13%	260	84.14%		
Total		1087	100%	168	100%	289	100%	252	100%	309	100%		
	Mean	1.81		1.702		1.817		1.841		1.841			
	Standard Dev.	0.393		0.459		0.388		0.366		0.366			
	Mean Percentile	59.52%		64.88%		59.17%		57.94%		57.93%			
I have a low sense of my worth and abilities.												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	True	12	21.05%	32	25.40%	26	14.61%	45	19.65%	20	16.39%	9	24.32%
2	False	45	78.95%	94	74.60%	152	85.39%	184	80.35%	102	83.61%	28	75.68%
Total		57	100%	126	100%	178	100%	229	100%	122	100%	37	100%
	Mean	1.789		1.746		1.854		1.803		1.836		1.757	
	Standard Dev.	0.411		0.437		0.354		0.398		0.372		0.435	
	Mean Percentile	60.53%		62.70%		57.30%		59.83%		58.20%		62.16%	
I have a low sense of my worth and abilities.												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	True	4	19.05%	26	33.77%	70	22.51%	47	18.15%	16	15.38%	24	10.48%
2	False	17	80.95%	51	66.23%	241	77.49%	212	81.85%	88	84.62%	205	89.52%
Total		21	100%	77	100%	311	100%	259	100%	104	100%	229	100%
	Mean	1.81		1.662		1.775		1.819		1.846		1.895	
	Standard Dev.	0.402		0.476		0.418		0.386		0.363		0.307	
	Mean Percentile	59.52%		66.88%		61.25%		59.07%		57.69%		55.24%	

Table 27: I have a high sense of personal accomplishment in my life.												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		-	
1	True	763	70.84%	99	60.37%	205	71.18%	187	75.10%	227	73.23%		
2	False	314	29.16%	65	39.63%	83	28.82%	62	24.90%	83	26.77%		

Total		1077		100%		164		100%		288		100%		249		100%		310		100%			
	Mean	1.292				1.396				1.288				1.249				1.268					
	Standard Dev.	0.455				0.491				0.454				0.433				0.443					
	Mean Percentile	85.42%				80.18%				85.59%				87.55%				86.61%					
I have a high sense of personal accomplishment in my life.																						by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18				Age 19-26				Age 27-35				Age 46-54				Age 55-64				Age 65 or older	
1	True	40	70.18%			91	72.22%			130	74.29%			156	68.12%			92	77.31%			15	40.54%
2	False	17	29.82%			35	27.78%			45	25.71%			73	31.88%			27	22.69%			22	59.46%
Total		57	100%			126	100%			175	100%			229	100%			119	100%			37	100%
	Mean	1.298				1.278				1.257				1.319				1.227				1.595	
	Standard Dev.	0.462				0.45				0.438				0.467				0.421				0.498	
	Mean Percentile	85.09%				86.11%				87.14%				84.06%				88.66%				70.27%	
I have a high sense of personal accomplishment in my life.																						by education	
#	Answer	Some HS				HS grad				Some College				College Grad				Some grad				Graduate degree	
1	True	12	57.14%			41	55.41%			210	68.18%			182	70.54%			81	77.14%			189	82.17%
2	False	9	42.86%			33	44.59%			98	31.82%			76	29.46%			24	22.86%			41	17.83%
Total		21	100%			74	100%			308	100%			258	100%			105	100%			230	100%
	Mean	1.429				1.446				1.318				1.295				1.229				1.178	
	Standard Dev.	0.507				0.5				0.467				0.457				0.422				0.384	
	Mean Percentile	78.57%				77.70%				84.09%				85.27%				88.57%				91.09%	

Table 28: I have a strong sense that who I am depends on another person.												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		_	
1	True	133	12.34%	27	16.36%	34	11.85%	28	11.24%	36	11.65%		
2	False	945	87.66%	138	83.64%	253	88.15%	221	88.76%	273	88.35%		
Total		1078	100%	165	100%	287	100%	249	100%	309	100%		
	Mean	1.877		1.836		1.882		1.888		1.883			
	Standard Dev.	0.329		0.371		0.324		0.317		0.321			
	Mean Percentile	56.17%		58.18%		55.92%		55.62%		55.83%			
I have a strong sense that who I am depends on another person.												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	True	8	14.55%	17	13.60%	18	10.23%	23	9.96%	8	6.61%	4	10.81%
2	False	47	85.45%	108	86.40%	158	89.77%	208	90.04%	113	93.39%	33	89.19%
Total		55	100%	125	100%	176	100%	231	100%	121	100%	37	100%
	Mean	1.855		1.864		1.898		1.9		1.934		1.892	
	Standard Dev.	0.356		0.344		0.304		0.3		0.25		0.315	
	Mean Percentile	57.27%		56.80%		55.11%		54.98%		53.31%		55.41%	
I have a strong sense that who I am depends on another person.												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	True	3	15.00%	17	22.08%	34	11.07%	30	11.54%	12	11.76%	15	6.58%
2	False	17	85.00%	60	77.92%	273	88.93%	230	88.46%	90	88.24%	213	93.42%
Total		20	100%	77	100%	307	100%	260	100%	102	100%	228	100%
	Mean	1.85		1.779		1.889		1.885		1.882		1.934	
	Standard Dev.	0.366		0.417		0.314		0.32		0.324		0.248	
	Mean Percentile	57.50%		61.04%		55.54%		55.77%		55.88%		53.29%	

Table 29: I feel I receive a generous amount of support from friends and family.											by income		
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		_	
1	True	875	80.65%	123	74.55%	238	82.07%	205	81.03%	253	81.61%		
2	False	210	19.35%	42	25.45%	52	17.93%	48	18.97%	57	18.39%		
Total		1085	100%	165	100%	290	100%	253	100%	310	100%		
	Mean	1.194		1.255		1.179		1.19		1.184			
	Standard Dev.	0.395		0.437		0.384		0.393		0.388			
	Mean Percentile	90.32%		87.27%		91.03%		90.51%		90.81%			
I feel I receive a generous amount of support from friends and family.											by age		
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	True	42	72.41%	106	84.80%	149	84.66%	184	78.97%	102	82.93%	30	83.33%
2	False	16	27.59%	19	15.20%	27	15.34%	49	21.03%	21	17.07%	6	16.67%
Total		58	100%	125	100%	176	100%	233	100%	123	100%	36	100%
	Mean	1.276		1.152		1.153		1.21		1.171		1.167	
	Standard Dev.	0.451		0.36		0.361		0.408		0.378		0.378	
	Mean Percentile	86.21%		92.40%		92.33%		89.48%		91.46%		91.67%	
I feel I receive a generous amount of support from friends and family.											by education		
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	True	15	71.43%	56	74.67%	252	82.08%	212	80.61%	87	82.86%	189	82.17%
2	False	6	28.57%	19	25.33%	55	17.92%	51	19.39%	18	17.14%	41	17.83%
Total		21	100%	75	100%	307	100%	263	100%	105	100%	230	100%
	Mean	1.286		1.253		1.179		1.194		1.171		1.178	
	Standard Dev.	0.463		0.438		0.384		0.396		0.379		0.384	
	Mean Percentile	85.71%		87.33%		91.04%		90.30%		91.43%		91.09%	

Table 30: I worry about my relationships with significant people in my life.												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k			
1	True	480	44.49%	94	56.29%	125	43.55%	94	37.30%	142	46.56%		
2	False	599	55.51%	73	43.71%	162	56.45%	158	62.70%	163	53.44%		
Total		1079	100%	167	100%	287	100%	252	100%	305	100%		
	Mean	1.555		1.437		1.564		1.627		1.534			
	Standard Dev.	0.497		0.498		0.497		0.485		0.5			
	Mean Percentile	72.24%		78.14%		71.78%		68.65%		73.28%			
I worry about my relationships with significant people in my life.												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	True	33	56.90%	73	58.40%	69	38.76%	91	39.74%	45	37.19%	12	35.29%
2	False	25	43.10%	52	41.60%	109	61.24%	138	60.26%	76	62.81%	22	64.71%
Total		58	100%	125	100%	178	100%	229	100%	121	100%	34	100%
	Mean	1.431		1.416		1.612		1.603		1.628		1.647	
	Standard Dev.	0.5		0.495		0.489		0.49		0.485		0.485	
	Mean Percentile	78.45%		79.20%		69.38%		69.87%		68.60%		67.65%	
I worry about my relationships with significant people in my life.												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	True	14	66.67%	35	46.67%	133	43.04%	111	43.19%	49	47.12%	87	38.16%
2	False	7	33.33%	40	53.33%	176	56.96%	146	56.81%	55	52.88%	141	61.84%

Total	21	100%	75	100%	309	100%	257	100%	104	100%	228	100%
Mean	1.333		1.533		1.57		1.568		1.529		1.618	
Standard Dev.	0.483		0.502		0.496		0.496		0.502		0.487	
Mean Percentile	83.33%		73.33%		71.52%		71.60%		73.56%		69.08%	

Table 31: I feel as if I do not fit the mold of what a traditional feminine woman is supposed to be.												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k			
1	True	575	53.94%	96	57.83%	157	54.70%	135	54.44%	162	53.82%		
2	False	491	46.06%	70	42.17%	130	45.30%	113	45.56%	139	46.18%		
Total		1066	100%	166	100%	287	100%	248	100%	301	100%		
	Mean	1.461		1.422		1.453		1.456		1.462			
	Standard Dev.	0.499		0.495		0.499		0.499		0.499			
	Mean Percentile	76.97%		78.92%		77.35%		77.22%		76.91%			
I feel as if I do not fit the mold of what a traditional feminine woman is supposed to be.												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	True	31	54.39%	71	57.26%	101	57.06%	122	55.20%	55	46.61%	12	33.33%
2	False	26	45.61%	53	42.74%	76	42.94%	99	44.80%	63	53.39%	24	66.67%
Total		57	100%	124	100%	177	100%	221	100%	118	100%	36	100%
	Mean	1.456		1.427		1.429		1.448		1.534		1.667	
	Standard Dev.	0.503		0.497		0.496		0.498		0.501		0.478	
	Mean Percentile	77.19%		78.63%		78.53%		77.60%		73.31%		66.67%	
I feel as if I do not fit the mold of what a traditional feminine woman is supposed to be.												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	True	8	40.00%	31	41.33%	148	48.37%	143	55.86%	62	60.78%	145	65.61%
2	False	12	60.00%	44	58.67%	158	51.63%	113	44.14%	40	39.22%	76	34.39%
Total		20	100%	75	100%	306	100%	256	100%	102	100%	221	100%
	Mean	1.6		1.587		1.516		1.441		1.392		1.344	
	Standard Dev.	0.503		0.496		0.501		0.498		0.491		0.476	
	Mean Percentile	70.00%		70.67%		74.18%		77.93%		80.39%		82.81%	

Table 32: Check any of the following that you consider to be female character traits:												by income
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		-
1	unemotional	45	0.56%	5	0.40%	12	0.55%	12	0.64%	11	0.49%	
2	aggressive	189	2.36%	27	2.18%	53	2.44%	50	2.68%	46	2.07%	
3	independent	578	7.22%	92	7.44%	161	7.41%	135	7.23%	155	6.97%	
4	dependent	420	5.25%	62	5.01%	121	5.57%	95	5.09%	117	5.26%	
5	sneaky	193	2.41%	25	2.02%	49	2.26%	48	2.57%	57	2.56%	
6	tactful	651	8.14%	95	7.68%	178	8.20%	152	8.14%	185	8.31%	
7	neat	707	8.84%	108	8.73%	195	8.98%	163	8.73%	195	8.76%	
8	direct	407	5.09%	63	5.09%	112	5.16%	102	5.46%	103	4.63%	
9	rough	48	0.60%	5	0.40%	15	0.69%	11	0.59%	12	0.54%	
10	emotional	901	11.26%	140	11.32%	238	10.96%	206	11.03%	264	11.87%	
11	non-aggressive	361	4.51%	59	4.77%	87	4.01%	78	4.18%	117	5.26%	
12	ambitious	540	6.75%	82	6.63%	156	7.18%	131	7.02%	136	6.11%	

13	passive	221	2.76%	34	2.75%	67	3.08%	45	2.41%	59	2.65%		
14	active	689	8.61%	109	8.81%	186	8.56%	162	8.68%	192	8.63%		
15	sloppy	59	0.74%	8	0.65%	15	0.69%	16	0.86%	16	0.72%		
16	gentle	904	11.30%	142	11.48%	237	10.91%	213	11.41%	256	11.51%		
17	blunt	182	2.27%	30	2.43%	53	2.44%	41	2.20%	45	2.02%		
18	not ambitious	79	0.99%	14	1.13%	15	0.69%	22	1.18%	24	1.08%		
19	illogical	164	2.05%	31	2.51%	45	2.07%	34	1.82%	45	2.02%		
20	logical	663	8.29%	106	8.57%	177	8.15%	151	8.09%	190	8.54%		
Total		8001	100%	1237	100%	2172	100%	1867	100%	2225	100%		
	Mean	10.694		10.871		10.617		10.635		10.755			
	Standard Dev.	5.264		5.286		5.265		5.274		5.246			
	Mean Percentile	51.53%		50.65%		51.91%		51.83%		51.22%			
Check any of the following that you consider to be female character traits:												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	unemotional	2	0.41%	6	0.62%	6	0.46%	8	0.50%	5	0.54%	1	0.38%
2	aggressive	14	2.84%	17	1.77%	25	1.91%	43	2.70%	25	2.71%	9	3.40%
3	independent	38	7.71%	68	7.08%	93	7.09%	115	7.22%	71	7.68%	21	7.92%
4	dependent	17	3.45%	57	5.93%	76	5.79%	82	5.15%	44	4.76%	11	4.15%
5	sneaky	14	2.84%	30	3.12%	28	2.13%	38	2.39%	15	1.62%	2	0.75%
6	tactful	34	6.90%	76	7.91%	111	8.46%	140	8.79%	83	8.98%	20	7.55%
7	neat	47	9.53%	85	8.84%	123	9.38%	133	8.35%	81	8.77%	30	11.32%
8	direct	32	6.49%	46	4.79%	56	4.27%	82	5.15%	60	6.49%	17	6.42%
9	rough	2	0.41%	7	0.73%	7	0.53%	12	0.75%	5	0.54%	1	0.38%
10	emotional	53	10.75%	113	11.76%	151	11.51%	177	11.11%	94	10.17%	30	11.32%
11	non-aggressive	17	3.45%	46	4.79%	66	5.03%	72	4.52%	37	4.00%	12	4.53%
12	ambitious	39	7.91%	66	6.87%	87	6.63%	104	6.53%	61	6.60%	14	5.28%
13	passive	16	3.25%	28	2.91%	38	2.90%	35	2.20%	16	1.73%	5	1.89%
14	active	45	9.13%	75	7.80%	110	8.38%	138	8.66%	85	9.20%	28	10.57%
15	sloppy	3	0.61%	7	0.73%	9	0.69%	16	1.00%	6	0.65%	0	0.00%
16	gentle	47	9.53%	113	11.76%	152	11.59%	179	11.24%	104	11.26%	33	12.45%
17	blunt	15	3.04%	21	2.19%	23	1.75%	40	2.51%	22	2.38%	1	0.38%
18	not ambitious	3	0.61%	7	0.73%	16	1.22%	18	1.13%	7	0.76%	2	0.75%
19	illogical	11	2.23%	27	2.81%	23	1.75%	35	2.20%	17	1.84%	3	1.13%
20	logical	44	8.92%	66	6.87%	112	8.54%	126	7.91%	86	9.31%	25	9.43%
Total		493	100%	961	100%	1312	100%	1593	100%	924	100%	265	100%
	Mean	10.765		10.588		10.712		10.66		10.696		10.589	
	Standard Dev.	5.279		5.186		5.237		5.282		5.356		5.283	
	Mean Percentile	51.18%		52.06%		51.44%		51.70%		51.52%		52.06%	

Check any of the following that you consider to be female character traits:												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	unemotional	2	1.16%	2	0.31%	12	0.47%	12	0.63%	4	0.59%	11	0.75%
2	aggressive	5	2.89%	19	2.94%	61	2.41%	40	2.09%	13	1.93%	36	2.46%
3	independent	14	8.09%	38	5.87%	184	7.27%	130	6.79%	50	7.43%	118	8.07%
4	dependent	6	3.47%	42	6.49%	141	5.57%	101	5.28%	39	5.79%	65	4.45%
5	sneaky	8	4.62%	14	2.16%	65	2.57%	50	2.61%	15	2.23%	27	1.85%
6	tactful	7	4.05%	54	8.35%	198	7.82%	161	8.41%	58	8.62%	137	9.37%
7	neat	15	8.67%	64	9.89%	224	8.85%	166	8.67%	55	8.17%	120	8.21%
8	direct	8	4.62%	39	6.03%	135	5.33%	94	4.91%	30	4.46%	77	5.27%
9	rough	2	1.16%	2	0.31%	12	0.47%	12	0.63%	4	0.59%	9	0.62%
10	emotional	18	10.40%	71	10.97%	282	11.14%	221	11.55%	83	12.33%	152	10.40%
11	non-aggressive	8	4.62%	25	3.86%	122	4.82%	87	4.55%	26	3.86%	58	3.97%
12	ambitious	13	7.51%	44	6.80%	171	6.76%	136	7.11%	41	6.09%	101	6.91%
13	passive	5	2.89%	20	3.09%	73	2.88%	51	2.66%	18	2.67%	28	1.92%
14	active	13	7.51%	51	7.88%	215	8.49%	166	8.67%	56	8.32%	137	9.37%
15	sloppy	2	1.16%	7	1.08%	19	0.75%	17	0.89%	5	0.74%	9	0.62%
16	gentle	16	9.25%	71	10.97%	270	10.67%	216	11.29%	82	12.18%	179	12.24%
17	blunt	9	5.20%	16	2.47%	60	2.37%	36	1.88%	15	2.23%	35	2.39%
18	not ambitious	2	1.16%	5	0.77%	24	0.95%	20	1.04%	8	1.19%	16	1.09%
19	illogical	7	4.05%	7	1.08%	63	2.49%	42	2.19%	14	2.08%	20	1.37%
20	logical	13	7.51%	56	8.66%	200	7.90%	156	8.15%	57	8.47%	127	8.69%
Total		173	100%	647	100%	2531	100%	1914	100%	673	100%	1462	100%
	Mean	10.902		10.567		10.646		10.716		10.755		10.701	
	Standard Dev.	5.445		5.233		5.258		5.227		5.311		5.329	
	Mean Percentile	50.49%		52.16%		51.77%		51.42%		51.23%		51.49%	

Table 33: Check whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.													
Things are right or wrong; good or bad. Every question has only one right answer.												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		-	
1	Agree	172	15.85%	23	13.94%	47	16.15%	40	15.94%	47	15.06%		
2	Disagree	913	84.15%	142	86.06%	244	83.85%	211	84.06%	265	84.94%		
Total		1085	100%	165	100%	291	100%	251	100%	312	100%		
	Mean	1.841		1.861		1.838		1.841		1.849			
	Standard Dev.	0.365		0.347		0.369		0.367		0.358			
	Mean Percentile	57.93%		56.97%		58.08%		57.97%		57.53%			

Things are right or wrong; good or bad. Every question has only one right answer.												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	Agree	8	13.79%	19	15.20%	38	21.47%	28	11.97%	15	12.61%	13	36.11%
2	Disagree	50	86.21%	106	84.80%	139	78.53%	206	88.03%	104	87.39%	23	63.89%
Total		58	100%	125	100%	177	100%	234	100%	119	100%	36	100%
	Mean	1.862		1.848		1.785		1.88		1.874		1.639	
	Standard Dev.	0.348		0.36		0.412		0.325		0.333		0.487	
	Mean Percentile	56.90%		57.60%		60.73%		55.98%		56.30%		68.06%	
Things are right or wrong; good or bad. Every question has only one right answer.												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	Agree	2	9.52%	23	29.11%	60	19.48%	38	14.67%	12	11.32%	13	5.70%
2	Disagree	19	90.48%	56	70.89%	248	80.52%	221	85.33%	94	88.68%	215	94.30%
Total		21	100%	79	100%	308	100%	259	100%	106	100%	228	100%
	Mean	1.905		1.709		1.805		1.853		1.887		1.943	
	Standard Dev.	0.301		0.457		0.397		0.355		0.318		0.232	
	Mean Percentile	54.76%		64.56%		59.74%		57.34%		55.66%		52.85%	

Table 34: All truth is absolute and the only way to know what is true is to locate and listen to the right teacher or authority figure.												<i>by income</i>	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		-	
1	Agree	247	23.17%	46	28.57%	68	24.03%	59	24.08%	57	18.27%		
2	Disagree	819	76.83%	115	71.43%	215	75.97%	186	75.92%	255	81.73%		
Total		1066	100%	161	100%	283	100%	245	100%	312	100%		
	Mean	1.768		1.714		1.76		1.759		1.817			
	Standard Dev.	0.422		0.453		0.428		0.428		0.387			
	Mean Percentile	61.59%		64.29%		62.01%		62.04%		59.13%			
All truth is absolute and the only way to know what is true is to locate and listen to the right teacher or authority figure.												<i>by age</i>	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	Agree	12	21.05%	33	26.83%	51	29.48%	33	14.35%	30	25.86%	16	43.24%
2	Disagree	45	78.95%	90	73.17%	122	70.52%	197	85.65%	86	74.14%	21	56.76%
Total		57	100%	123	100%	173	100%	230	100%	116	100%	37	100%
	Mean	1.789		1.732		1.705		1.857		1.741		1.568	
	Standard Dev.	0.411		0.445		0.457		0.351		0.44		0.502	
	Mean Percentile	60.53%		63.41%		64.74%		57.17%		62.93%		71.62%	
All truth is absolute and the only way to know what is true is to locate and listen to the right teacher or authority figure.												<i>by education</i>	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	Agree	3	14.29%	32	41.03%	68	22.44%	57	22.27%	29	28.71%	33	14.67%
2	Disagree	18	85.71%	46	58.97%	235	77.56%	199	77.73%	72	71.29%	192	85.33%
Total		21	100%	78	100%	303	100%	256	100%	101	100%	225	100%
	Mean	1.857		1.59		1.776		1.777		1.713		1.853	
	Standard Dev.	0.359		0.495		0.418		0.417		0.455		0.355	
	Mean Percentile	57.14%		70.51%		61.22%		61.13%		64.36%		57.33%	

Table 35: I usually strive to subordinate my own wishes and actions to the desires of others.												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k			
1	Agree	446	42.16%	77	48.12%	110	39.01%	107	43.15%	124	40.26%		
2	Disagree	612	57.84%	83	51.88%	172	60.99%	141	56.85%	184	59.74%		
Total		1058	100%	160	100%	282	100%	248	100%	308	100%		
	Mean	1.578		1.519		1.61		1.569		1.597			
	Standard Dev.	0.494		0.501		0.489		0.496		0.491			
	Mean Percentile	71.08%		74.06%		69.50%		71.57%		70.13%			
I usually strive to subordinate my own wishes and actions to the desires of others.												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	Agree	26	49.06%	51	42.50%	59	33.91%	104	45.81%	48	41.74%	24	66.67%
2	Disagree	27	50.94%	69	57.50%	115	66.09%	123	54.19%	67	58.26%	12	33.33%
Total		53	100%	120	100%	174	100%	227	100%	115	100%	36	100%
	Mean	1.509		1.575		1.661		1.542		1.583		1.333	
	Standard Dev.	0.505		0.496		0.475		0.499		0.495		0.478	
	Mean Percentile	74.53%		71.25%		66.95%		72.91%		70.87%		83.33%	
I usually strive to subordinate my own wishes and actions to the desires of others.												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	Agree	12	60.00%	47	60.26%	124	41.47%	102	40.00%	41	40.59%	78	34.82%
2	Disagree	8	40.00%	31	39.74%	175	58.53%	153	60.00%	60	59.41%	146	65.18%
Total		20	100%	78	100%	299	100%	255	100%	101	100%	224	100%
	Mean	1.4		1.397		1.585		1.6		1.594		1.652	
	Standard Dev.	0.503		0.493		0.493		0.491		0.494		0.477	
	Mean Percentile	80.00%		80.13%		70.74%		70.00%		70.30%		67.41%	

Table 36: I like predictability (what will happen and when) and clarity (what is expected of me).												<i>by income</i>	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k			
1	Agree	913	84.30%	133	81.60%	249	85.27%	215	85.66%	258	82.69%		
2	Disagree	170	15.70%	30	18.40%	43	14.73%	36	14.34%	54	17.31%		
Total		1083	100%	163	100%	292	100%	251	100%	312	100%		
	Mean	1.157		1.184		1.147		1.143		1.173			
	Standard Dev.	0.364		0.389		0.355		0.351		0.379			
	Mean Percentile	92.15%		90.80%		92.64%		92.83%		91.35%			
I like predictability (what will happen and when) and clarity (what is expected of me).												<i>by age</i>	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	Agree	47	82.46%	108	86.40%	162	91.53%	186	79.83%	100	83.33%	32	88.89%
2	Disagree	10	17.54%	17	13.60%	15	8.47%	47	20.17%	20	16.67%	4	11.11%
Total		57	100%	125	100%	177	100%	233	100%	120	100%	36	100%
	Mean	1.175		1.136		1.085		1.202		1.167		1.111	
	Standard Dev.	0.384		0.344		0.279		0.402		0.374		0.319	
	Mean Percentile	91.23%		93.20%		95.76%		89.91%		91.67%		94.44%	

I like predictability (what will happen and when) and clarity (what is expected of me).											by education		
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	Agree	15	71.43%	73	93.59%	265	84.94%	216	83.40%	88	83.02%	185	82.22%
2	Disagree	6	28.57%	5	6.41%	47	15.06%	43	16.60%	18	16.98%	40	17.78%
Total		21	100%	78	100%	312	100%	259	100%	106	100%	225	100%
	Mean	1.286		1.064		1.151		1.166		1.17		1.178	
	Standard Dev.	0.463		0.247		0.358		0.373		0.377		0.383	
	Mean Percentile	85.71%		96.79%		92.47%		91.70%		91.51%		91.11%	

Table 37: I fear if I excel at a job, sport, or other task that those I love will be penalized in some way.												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		-	
1	Agree	70	6.46%	13	7.88%	19	6.51%	16	6.43%	20	6.39%		
2	Disagree	1013	93.54%	152	92.12%	273	93.49%	233	93.57%	293	93.61%		
Total		1083	100%	165	100%	292	100%	249	100%	313	100%		
	Mean	1.935		1.921		1.935		1.936		1.936			
	Standard Dev.	0.246		0.27		0.247		0.246		0.245			
	Mean Percentile	53.23%		53.94%		53.25%		53.21%		53.19%			
I fear if I excel at a job, sport, or other task that those I love will be penalized in some way.												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	Agree	3	5.26%	9	7.38%	8	4.49%	14	6.01%	2	1.65%	0	0.00%
2	Disagree	54	94.74%	113	92.62%	170	95.51%	219	93.99%	119	98.35%	37	100%
Total		57	100%	122	100%	178	100%	233	100%	121	100%	37	100%
	Mean	1.947		1.926		1.955		1.94		1.983		2	
	Standard Dev.	0.225		0.262		0.208		0.238		0.128		0	
	Mean Percentile	52.63%		53.69%		52.25%		53.00%		50.83%		50.00%	
I fear if I excel at a job, sport, or other task that those I love will be penalized in some way.												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	Agree	0	0.00%	3	3.80%	24	7.72%	17	6.61%	6	5.66%	11	4.82%
2	Disagree	21	100%	76	96.20%	287	92.28%	240	93.39%	100	94.34%	217	95.18%
Total		21	100%	79	100%	311	100%	257	100%	106	100%	228	100%
	Mean	2		1.962		1.923		1.934		1.943		1.952	
	Standard Dev.	0		0.192		0.267		0.249		0.232		0.215	
	Mean Percentile	50.00%		51.90%		53.86%		53.31%		52.83%		52.41%	

Table 38: I think that truth is found primarily through my own experiences.											by income		
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k			
1	Agree	253	23.67%	44	26.99%	64	22.38%	48	19.35%	83	26.95%		
2	Disagree	816	76.33%	119	73.01%	222	77.62%	200	80.65%	225	73.05%		
Total		1069	100%	163	100%	286	100%	248	100%	308	100%		
	Mean	1.763		1.73		1.776		1.806		1.731			
	Standard Dev.	0.425		0.445		0.418		0.396		0.444			
	Mean Percentile	61.83%		63.50%		61.19%		59.68%		63.47%			
I think that truth is found primarily through my own experiences.											by age		
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	Agree	16	29.09%	42	34.71%	43	24.29%	40	17.17%	19	16.10%	17	50.00%
2	Disagree	39	70.91%	79	65.29%	134	75.71%	193	82.83%	99	83.90%	17	50.00%
Total		55	100%	121	100%	177	100%	233	100%	118	100%	34	100%
	Mean	1.709		1.653		1.757		1.828		1.839		1.5	

	Standard Dev.	0.458		0.478		0.43		0.378		0.369		0.508	
	Mean	64.55%		67.36%		62.15%		58.58%		58.05%		75.00%	
	Percentile												
I think that truth is found primarily through my own experiences.												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	Agree	7	35.00%	21	28.38%	75	24.59%	52	20.23%	18	17.14%	48	21.24%
2	Disagree	13	65.00%	53	71.62%	230	75.41%	205	79.77%	87	82.86%	178	78.76%
Total		20	100%	74	100%	305	100%	257	100%	105	100%	226	100%
	Mean	1.65		1.716		1.754		1.798		1.829		1.788	
	Standard Dev.	0.489		0.454		0.431		0.403		0.379		0.41	
	Mean	67.50%		64.19%		62.30%		60.12%		58.57%		60.62%	
	Percentile												

Table 39: In the sermons I hear I am encouraged to think for myself.												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k			
1	Agree	776	73.76%	120	76.43%	208	72.73%	176	71.54%	227	74.67%		
2	Disagree	276	26.24%	37	23.57%	78	27.27%	70	28.46%	77	25.33%		
Total		1052	100%	157	100%	286	100%	246	100%	304	100%		
	Mean	1.262		1.236		1.273		1.285		1.253			
	Standard Dev.	0.44		0.426		0.446		0.452		0.436			
	Mean Percentile	86.88%		88.22%		86.36%		85.77%		87.34%			
In the sermons I hear I am encouraged to think for myself.												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	Agree	45	84.91%	81	65.32%	120	69.77%	158	70.54%	88	75.86%	29	80.56%
2	Disagree	8	15.09%	43	34.68%	52	30.23%	66	29.46%	28	24.14%	7	19.44%
Total		53	100%	124	100%	172	100%	224	100%	116	100%	36	100%
	Mean	1.151		1.347		1.302		1.295		1.241		1.194	
	Standard Dev.	0.361		0.478		0.461		0.457		0.43		0.401	
	Mean Percentile	92.45%		82.66%		84.88%		85.27%		87.93%		90.28%	
In the sermons I hear I am encouraged to think for myself.												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	Agree	14	70.00%	52	68.42%	228	76.25%	179	71.31%	74	71.15%	163	73.09%
2	Disagree	6	30.00%	24	31.58%	71	23.75%	72	28.69%	30	28.85%	60	26.91%
Total		20	100%	76	100%	299	100%	251	100%	104	100%	223	100%
	Mean	1.3		1.316		1.237		1.287		1.288		1.269	
	Standard Dev.	0.47		0.468		0.426		0.453		0.455		0.444	
	Mean Percentile	85.00%		84.21%		88.13%		85.66%		85.58%		86.55%	

Table 40: Check one box that most closely describes you												by income	
#	Answer	<u>Base</u>		<u>income < 30k</u>		<u>income 30-50k</u>		<u>income 50-75k</u>		<u>over 75k</u>		<u>-</u>	
1	Most of the time I feel that I am influenced by and subject to the whims of powerful people around me. I feel as if they are usually right	17	1.58%	5	3.11%	7	2.40%	2	0.80%	2	0.64%		
2	I find that I am most comfortable when I listen to and follow the lead of	174	16.13%	35	21.74%	47	16.10%	37	14.80%	42	13.38%		

	knowledgeable authority figures.												
3	I don't like listening to external authorities unless they say something that my intuition tells me is right.	45	4.17%	6	3.73%	15	5.14%	8	3.20%	16	5.10%		
4	Although I'm not opposed to hearing what the experts in a given area have to say, I've developed my own set way of figuring things out that leads me to understanding and truth.	155	14.37%	25	15.53%	42	14.38%	40	16.00%	41	13.06%		
5	I appreciate people who know a lot about a subject and can teach it, but I usually learn best when I am actively asking a series of questions and seeking the answers myself before arriving at conclusions.	688	63.76%	90	55.90%	181	61.99%	163	65.20%	213	67.83%		
	Total	1079	100%	161	100%	292	100%	250	100%	314	100%		
	Mean	4.226		3.994		4.175		4.3		4.341			
	Standard Dev.	1.19		1.325		1.227		1.124		1.1			
	Mean Percentile	35.48%		40.12%		36.51%		34.00%		33.18%			
Check one box that most closely describes you												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	Most of the time I feel that I am influenced by and subject to the whims of powerful people around me. I feel as if they are usually right	2	3.45%	1	0.80%	1	0.57%	6	2.59%	3	2.46%	0	0.00%
2	I find that I am most comfortable when I listen to and follow the lead of knowledgeable authority figures.	12	20.69%	24	19.20%	29	16.48%	28	12.07%	20	16.39%	11	31.43%
3	I don't like listening to external authorities unless they say something that my intuition tells me is right.	2	3.45%	10	8.00%	11	6.25%	7	3.02%	3	2.46%	1	2.86%
4	Although I'm not opposed to hearing what the	8	13.79%	14	11.20%	30	17.05%	37	15.95%	12	9.84%	4	11.43%

	experts in a given area have to say, I've developed my own set way of figuring things out that leads me to understanding and truth.												
5	I appreciate people who know a lot about a subject and can teach it, but I usually learn best when I am actively asking a series of questions and seeking the answers myself before arriving at conclusions.	34	58.62%	76	60.80%	105	59.66%	154	66.38%	84	68.85%	19	54.29%
Total		58	100%	125	100%	176	100%	232	100%	122	100%	35	100%
Mean		4.034		4.12		4.188		4.315		4.262		3.886	
Standard Dev.		1.337		1.235		1.158		1.147		1.239		1.367	
Mean Percentile		39.31%		37.60%		36.25%		33.71%		34.75%		42.29%	
Check one box that most closely describes you												by education	
#	Answer	<u>Some HS</u>		<u>HS grad</u>		<u>Some College</u>		<u>College Grad</u>		<u>Some grad</u>		<u>Graduate degree</u>	
1	Most of the time I feel that I am influenced by and subject to the whims of powerful people around me. I feel as if they are usually right	1	4.76%	2	2.56%	7	2.24%	2	0.78%	1	0.94%	0	0.00%
2	I find that I am most comfortable when I listen to and follow the lead of knowledgeable authority figures.	6	28.57%	13	16.67%	57	18.21%	40	15.50%	14	13.21%	25	10.92%
3	I don't like listening to external authorities unless they say something that my intuition tells me is right.	2	9.52%	3	3.85%	12	3.83%	11	4.26%	3	2.83%	9	3.93%
4	Although I'm not opposed to hearing what the experts in a given area have to say, I've developed my own set way of figuring things out that leads me to understanding and truth.	3	14.29%	13	16.67%	42	13.42%	39	15.12%	18	16.98%	35	15.28%
5	I appreciate people who know a lot about a subject and can	9	42.86%	47	60.26%	195	62.30%	166	64.34%	70	66.04%	160	69.87%

	teach it, but I usually learn best when I am actively asking a series of questions and seeking the answers myself before arriving at conclusions.												
	Total	21	100%	78	100%	313	100%	258	100%	106	100%	229	100%
	Mean	3.619		4.154		4.153		4.267		4.34		4.441	
	Standard Dev.	1.431		1.239		1.254		1.144		1.094		0.992	
	Mean Percentile	47.62%		36.92%		36.93%		34.65%		33.21%		31.18%	
Table 41: In considering how your faith in God could benefit most, rank these statements in order from 1 to 4, with 1 being the most beneficial.													
	no data by group												

Table 42: Check all the apply												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		-	
1	I feel encouraged to develop and use my talents and gifts at home	873	36.65%	135	36.99%	235	36.66%	208	36.49%	245	36.57%		
2	I feel encouraged to develop and use my talents and gifts at work	714	29.97%	109	29.86%	189	29.49%	175	30.70%	206	30.75%		
3	I feel encouraged to develop and use my talents and gifts at church	795	33.38%	121	33.15%	217	33.85%	187	32.81%	219	32.69%		
Total		2382	100%	365	100%	641	100%	570	100%	670	100%		
	Mean	1.967		1.962		1.972		1.963		1.961			
	Standard Dev.	0.836		0.838		0.84		0.832		0.832			
	Mean Percentile	67.76%		67.95%		67.60%		67.89%		67.96%			
Check all the apply												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	I feel encouraged to develop and use my talents and gifts at home	45	34.62%	104	35.37%	144	36.92%	198	37.36%	94	35.61%	19	34.55%
2	I feel encouraged to develop and use my talents and gifts at work	36	27.69%	92	31.29%	119	30.51%	163	30.75%	83	31.44%	12	21.82%
3	I feel encouraged to develop and use my talents and gifts at	49	37.69%	98	33.33%	127	32.56%	169	31.89%	87	32.95%	24	43.64%

	church												
Total		130	100%	294	100%	390	100%	530	100%	264	100%	55	100%
	Mean	2.031		1.98		1.956		1.945		1.973		2.091	
	Standard Dev.	0.853		0.83		0.834		0.831		0.829		0.888	
	Mean Percentile	65.64%		67.35%		68.12%		68.49%		67.55%		63.64%	
Check all the apply												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	I feel encouraged to develop and use my talents and gifts at home	15	38.46%	65	38.92%	264	36.62%	228	36.95%	92	37.55%	205	35.41%
2	I feel encouraged to develop and use my talents and gifts at work	7	17.95%	46	27.54%	211	29.26%	181	29.34%	74	30.20%	194	33.51%
3	I feel encouraged to develop and use my talents and gifts at church	17	43.59%	56	33.53%	246	34.12%	208	33.71%	79	32.24%	180	31.09%
Total		39	100%	167	100%	721	100%	617	100%	245	100%	579	100%
	Mean	2.051		1.946		1.975		1.968		1.947		1.957	
	Standard Dev.	0.916		0.852		0.841		0.841		0.835		0.815	
	Mean Percentile	64.96%		68.46%		67.50%		67.75%		68.44%		68.11%	

Table 43: Check all the apply												by income	
#	Answer	<u>Base</u>		<u>income < 30k</u>		<u>income 30-50k</u>		<u>income 50-75k</u>		<u>over 75k</u>		-	
1	My pastor encourages me to develop and use my talents and gifts.	656	24.60%	105	28.30%	186	25.58%	144	22.71%	180	23.05%		
2	Women in church leadership encourage me to develop and use my talents and gifts.	614	23.02%	89	23.99%	176	24.21%	142	22.40%	176	22.54%		
3	Other women friends encourage me to develop and use my talents and gifts.	799	29.96%	125	33.69%	214	29.44%	190	29.97%	223	28.55%		
4	My husband (if married) encourages me to develop and use my talents and gifts.	598	22.42%	52	14.02%	151	20.77%	158	24.92%	202	25.86%		

Total		2667	100%	371	100%	727	100%	634	100%	781	100%		
	Mean	2.502		2.334		2.454		2.571		2.572			
	Standard Dev.	1.091		1.035		1.085		1.095		1.107			
	Mean Percentile	62.45%		66.64%		63.65%		60.73%		60.69%			
Check all the apply												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	My pastor encourages me to develop and use my talents and gifts.	39	26.90%	82	26.80%	100	23.31%	134	23.10%	76	24.20%	18	27.69%
2	Women in church leadership encourage me to develop and use my talents and gifts.	39	26.90%	69	22.55%	97	22.61%	126	21.72%	75	23.89%	17	26.15%
3	Other women friends encourage me to develop and use my talents and gifts.	45	31.03%	97	31.70%	126	29.37%	174	30.00%	95	30.25%	20	30.77%
4	My husband (if married) encourages me to develop and use my talents and gifts.	22	15.17%	58	18.95%	106	24.71%	146	25.17%	68	21.66%	10	15.38%
Total		145	100%	306	100%	429	100%	580	100%	314	100%	65	100%
	Mean	2.345		2.428		2.555		2.572		2.494		2.338	
	Standard Dev.	1.037		1.079		1.1		1.101		1.082		1.05	
	Mean Percentile	66.38%		64.30%		61.13%		60.69%		62.66%		66.54%	
Check all the apply												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	My pastor encourages me to develop and use my talents and gifts.	16	35.56%	41	23.56%	206	25.81%	166	23.92%	70	24.91%	150	22.76%
2	Women in church leadership encourage me to develop and use my talents and gifts.	14	31.11%	36	20.69%	182	22.81%	157	22.62%	64	22.78%	158	23.98%
3	Other women friends encourage me to develop and use my talents and gifts.	12	26.67%	54	31.03%	239	29.95%	210	30.26%	85	30.25%	195	29.59%

4	My husband (if married) encourages me to develop and use my talents and gifts.	3	6.67%	43	24.71%	171	21.43%	161	23.20%	62	22.06%	156	23.67%
Total		45	100%	174	100%	798	100%	694	100%	281	100%	659	100%
	Mean	2.044		2.569		2.47		2.527		2.495		2.542	
	Standard Dev.	0.952		1.104		1.093		1.092		1.093		1.086	
	Mean Percentile	73.89%		60.78%		63.25%		61.82%		62.63%		61.46%	

Table 44: Check one												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		-	
1	My primary role in my church family is in leadership.	460	45.82%	57	36.77%	125	45.62%	111	47.23%	143	51.07%		
2	My primary role in my church family is behind-the-scenes.	311	30.98%	60	38.71%	88	32.12%	70	29.79%	75	26.79%		
3	I have not yet found my primary role in my church family	233	23.21%	38	24.52%	61	22.26%	54	22.98%	62	22.14%		
Total		1004	100%	155	100%	274	100%	235	100%	280	100%		
	Mean	1.774		1.877		1.766		1.757		1.711			
	Standard Dev.	0.8		0.776		0.792		0.804		0.807			
	Mean Percentile	74.20%		70.75%		74.45%		74.75%		76.31%			
Check one												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	My primary role in my church family is in leadership.	24	42.11%	46	38.02%	67	38.73%	102	47.22%	69	63.89%	9	32.14%
2	My primary role in my church family is behind-the-scenes.	17	29.82%	42	34.71%	51	29.48%	71	32.87%	21	19.44%	11	39.29%
3	I have not yet found my primary role in my church family	16	28.07%	33	27.27%	55	31.79%	43	19.91%	18	16.67%	8	28.57%
Total		57	100%	121	100%	173	100%	216	100%	108	100%	28	100%
	Mean	1.86		1.893		1.931		1.727		1.528		1.964	
	Standard Dev.	0.833		0.804		0.839		0.774		0.767		0.793	
	Mean Percentile	71.35%		70.25%		68.98%		75.77%		82.41%		67.86%	

Check one												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	My primary role in my church family is in leadership.	7	33.33%	23	29.49%	127	41.23%	119	45.42%	48	47.52%	136	59.91%
2	My primary role in my church family is behind-the-scenes.	7	33.33%	33	42.31%	109	35.39%	79	30.15%	34	33.66%	44	19.38%
3	I have not yet found my primary role in my church family	7	33.33%	22	28.21%	72	23.38%	64	24.43%	19	18.81%	47	20.70%
Total		21	100%	78	100%	308	100%	262	100%	101	100%	227	100%
Mean		2		1.987		1.821		1.79		1.713		1.608	
Standard Dev.		0.837		0.764		0.785		0.811		0.766		0.81	
Mean Percentile		66.67%		67.09%		72.62%		73.66%		76.24%		79.74%	

Table 45: Check One													
My role in my church family is												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		-	
1	fulfilling	685	68.84%	103	66.88%	198	72.79%	160	67.80%	187	68.00%		
2	unfulfilling	121	12.16%	18	11.69%	25	9.19%	35	14.83%	37	13.45%		
3	I don't know	189	18.99%	33	21.43%	49	18.01%	41	17.37%	51	18.55%		
Total		995	100%	154	100%	272	100%	236	100%	275	100%		
	Mean	1.502		1.545		1.452		1.496		1.505			
	Standard Dev.	0.794		0.825		0.781		0.775		0.789			
	Mean Percentile	83.28%		81.82%		84.93%		83.47%		83.15%			
My role in my church family is												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	fulfilling	36	65.45%	78	64.46%	105	61.40%	153	70.51%	83	76.15%	19	79.17%
2	unfulfilling	5	9.09%	13	10.74%	21	12.28%	35	16.13%	13	11.93%	0	0.00%
3	I don't know	14	25.45%	30	24.79%	45	26.32%	29	13.36%	13	11.93%	5	20.83%
Total		55	100%	121	100%	171	100%	217	100%	109	100%	24	100%
	Mean	1.6		1.603		1.649		1.429		1.358		1.417	
	Standard Dev.	0.873		0.861		0.871		0.717		0.687		0.83	
	Mean Percentile	80.00%		79.89%		78.36%		85.71%		88.07%		86.11%	
My role in my church family is												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	fulfilling	11	52.38%	46	61.33%	208	68.20%	181	69.88%	72	69.90%	164	72.25%
2	unfulfilling	3	14.29%	10	13.33%	37	12.13%	30	11.58%	17	16.50%	24	10.57%
3	I don't know	7	33.33%	19	25.33%	60	19.67%	48	18.53%	14	13.59%	39	17.18%
Total		21	100%	75	100%	305	100%	259	100%	103	100%	227	100%
	Mean	1.81		1.64		1.515		1.486		1.437		1.449	
	Standard Dev.	0.928		0.864		0.803		0.789		0.723		0.77	
	Mean Percentile	73.02%		78.67%		82.84%		83.78%		85.44%		85.02%	

Table 46: My role in my church family is												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		-	
1	important	792	80.00%	119	78.29%	222	81.32%	190	80.85%	217	79.49%		
2	unimportant	45	4.55%	7	4.61%	15	5.49%	7	2.98%	15	5.49%		
3	I don't know	153	15.45%	26	17.11%	36	13.19%	38	16.17%	41	15.02%		
Total		990	100%	152	100%	273	100%	235	100%	273	100%		
	Mean	1.355		1.388		1.319		1.353		1.355			
	Standard Dev.	0.734		0.764		0.695		0.744		0.729			
	Mean Percentile	88.18%		87.06%		89.38%		88.23%		88.16%			
My role in my church family is												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	important	45	78.95%	83	68.60%	128	75.29%	182	83.87%	95	86.36%	19	82.61%
2	unimportant	1	1.75%	10	8.26%	9	5.29%	7	3.23%	5	4.55%	1	4.35%
3	I don't know	11	19.30%	28	23.14%	33	19.41%	28	12.90%	10	9.09%	3	13.04%
Total		57	100%	121	100%	170	100%	217	100%	110	100%	23	100%
	Mean	1.404		1.545		1.441		1.29		1.227		1.304	
	Standard Dev.	0.799		0.847		0.799		0.683		0.601		0.703	
	Mean Percentile	86.55%		81.82%		85.29%		90.32%		92.42%		89.86%	
My role in my church family is												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	important	16	76.19%	55	75.34%	245	80.07%	199	77.13%	88	86.27%	187	82.74%
2	unimportant	1	4.76%	4	5.48%	15	4.90%	8	3.10%	4	3.92%	13	5.75%
3	I don't know	4	19.05%	14	19.18%	46	15.03%	51	19.77%	10	9.80%	26	11.50%
Total		21	100%	73	100%	306	100%	258	100%	102	100%	226	100%
	Mean	1.429		1.438		1.35		1.426		1.235		1.288	
	Standard Dev.	0.811		0.799		0.728		0.802		0.616		0.661	
	Mean Percentile	85.71%		85.39%		88.34%		85.79%		92.16%		90.41%	

Table 47: My role in my church family is											by income		
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k		-	
1	tedious	56	5.78%	13	8.67%	16	5.97%	12	5.19%	13	4.89%		
2	challenging	643	66.36%	91	60.67%	182	67.91%	162	70.13%	175	65.79%		
3	I don't know	270	27.86%	46	30.67%	70	26.12%	57	24.68%	78	29.32%		
Total		969	100%	150	100%	268	100%	231	100%	266	100%		
	Mean	2.221		2.22		2.201		2.195		2.244			
	Standard Dev.	0.537		0.589		0.53		0.512		0.532			
	Mean Percentile	59.31%		59.33%		59.95%		60.17%		58.52%			
My role in my church family is											by age		
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	tedious	2	3.64%	7	6.03%	10	5.99%	14	6.70%	2	1.89%	1	3.70%
2	challenging	36	65.45%	65	56.03%	98	58.68%	149	71.29%	83	78.30%	16	59.26%
3	I don't know	17	30.91%	44	37.93%	59	35.33%	46	22.01%	21	19.81%	10	37.04%
Total		55	100%	116	100%	167	100%	209	100%	106	100%	27	100%
	Mean	2.273		2.319		2.293		2.153		2.179		2.333	
	Standard Dev.	0.525		0.584		0.574		0.515		0.432		0.555	
	Mean Percentile	57.58%		56.03%		56.89%		61.56%		60.69%		55.56%	

My role in my church family is												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	tedious	3	14.29%	2	2.67%	17	5.76%	13	5.24%	6	5.88%	14	6.31%
2	challenging	11	52.38%	47	62.67%	192	65.08%	158	63.71%	75	73.53%	159	71.62%
3	I don't know	7	33.33%	26	34.67%	86	29.15%	77	31.05%	21	20.59%	49	22.07%
Total		21	100%	75	100%	295	100%	248	100%	102	100%	222	100%
	Mean	2.19		2.32		2.234		2.258		2.147		2.158	
	Standard Dev.	0.68		0.524		0.544		0.545		0.495		0.51	
	Mean Percentile	60.32%		56.00%		58.87%		58.06%		61.76%		61.41%	

Table 48: Do you consider yourself a “born again” Christian? (John 3)												by income	
#	Answer	Base		income < 30k		income 30-50k		income 50-75k		over 75k			
1	Yes	917	90.88%	141	91.56%	250	90.25%	223	93.70%	253	89.72%		
2	No	92	9.12%	13	8.44%	27	9.75%	15	6.30%	29	10.28%		
Total		1009	100%	154	100%	277	100%	238	100%	282	100%		
	Mean	1.091		1.084		1.097		1.063		1.103			
	Standard Dev.	0.288		0.279		0.297		0.244		0.304			
	Mean Percentile	95.44%		95.78%		95.13%		96.85%		94.86%			
Do you consider yourself a “born again” Christian? (John 3)												by age	
#	Answer	Age 13-18		Age 19-26		Age 27-35		Age 46-54		Age 55-64		Age 65 or older	
1	Yes	54	96.43%	107	88.43%	148	86.55%	203	92.27%	103	93.64%	22	81.48%
2	No	2	3.57%	14	11.57%	23	13.45%	17	7.73%	7	6.36%	5	18.52%
Total		56	100%	121	100%	171	100%	220	100%	110	100%	27	100%
	Mean	1.036		1.116		1.135		1.077		1.064		1.185	
	Standard Dev.	0.187		0.321		0.342		0.268		0.245		0.396	
	Mean Percentile	98.21%		94.21%		93.27%		96.14%		96.82%		90.74%	
Do you consider yourself a “born again” Christian? (John 3)												by education	
#	Answer	Some HS		HS grad		Some College		College Grad		Some grad		Graduate degree	
1	Yes	20	95.24%	70	90.91%	290	92.95%	241	92.34%	101	95.28%	190	83.70%
2	No	1	4.76%	7	9.09%	22	7.05%	20	7.66%	5	4.72%	37	16.30%
Total		21	100%	77	100%	312	100%	261	100%	106	100%	227	100%
	Mean	1.048		1.091		1.071		1.077		1.047		1.163	
	Standard Dev.	0.218		0.289		0.256		0.267		0.213		0.37	
	Mean Percentile	97.62%		95.45%		96.47%		96.17%		97.64%		91.85%	

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